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



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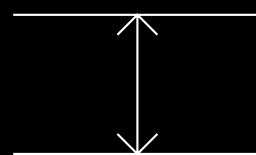
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© HAGGIS HARTMAN

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WATSON HAS REALLY IMPRESSED IN THE GPS
© RED BULL MEDIA HOUSE

COMMENT

So right about now you might just be wondering 'what the hell is a speedway rider doing in DBR?'. It's definitely a valid question because it's not normally a sport that we cover but it's one I can answer so please let me explain...

For the last few months or so we've been planning to hook up with Aussie speedway ace Darcy Ward for a photo shoot and interview as not only is he sh*t-hot at shifting shale but he's also a demon on a dirt bike and definitely has the skills to be classed as an expert motocrosser. That in itself isn't reason enough to get in Britain's biggest selling dirt bike mag but there's way more to his story and it's one we wanted to share.

One of the most exciting riders to hit the Speedway GP scene in the last few years, Darcy made a big judgement error last summer and ended up being banned from the sport he loves for 10 months. It was an open and shut case that there was no point in fighting so Darcy did the right thing, took the punishment on the chin and sat out the remainder of the 2014 season – unable to earn his place in the 2015 world championship as a result.

The ban in itself was a pretty big story but the hole he left in the SGP series was even bigger. To be honest there's no other rider like Darcy and while he's not always the fastest out there he's definitely the most exciting to watch as his cat-like reflexes and sheer testicular fortitude have fans on the edge of their seats every time he hits the track.

Way back in June the ban ran its course and Darcy returned to action. Even after such a lengthy layoff he was in great demand and was soon signed to ride for clubs in the British, Swedish and Polish leagues. Unfortunately, while competing in Poland on August 23, Ward caught another rider's back wheel coming out of a turn and was thrown from his machine – landing on the back of his neck before bouncing into and back off the trackside fencing.

The accident has left Darcy with no feeling in his lower body and while the full extent of his injuries is currently unknown – that's what his family wants at this point – the situation is a precarious one although it has improved enough for the 23-year-old to be transferred back to the UK where he's based during the racing season.

Obviously a bit of a freak accident, it still highlights how dangerous motorcycling is and whether you race professionally or for fun there's still that risk of injury each and every time you ride. Obviously, Darcy is not the only racer who's suffered injuries like these of late and I sincerely hope that he – and everyone else who's in a similar position – manages to make a full recovery.

Stay strong guys and see you at the races soon...

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TONY

CAIROLI



AFTER AN UNPLANNED MID-SEASON BREAK OUR PROTAGONIST IS GETTING PREPARED TO MAKE A COMEBACK...

Hey folks! Unfortunately, as you know, I've not raced since the Grand Prix of the Czech Republic in Loket and I will also not be riding in Mantova or Assen. As it stands I will be missing four races – definitely not in the master plan – but the good news being that I was in Belgium during those off days and I had the green light in order to start training again.

My elbow has now finally healed and my left arm is feeling much better compared to four weeks ago when I had to stop. I can start riding again meaning that I could race in Mantova and Assen but I'm just not fit enough to do it because I have been unable to train for such a long time. The level of motocross these days doesn't allow you to race and be competitive if you're not as strong and well trained as at the beginning of the year.

The fact that I couldn't ride gave me some free time at a time of the year that I'm not used to it. After being in Lommel for the MXGP race I took my fiancé Jill for a mini holiday, going down to the coast with some friends in order to enjoy the summer – something I usually can't do.

Now fit and with the green light I can't wait to jump back on my bike and ride again on my training track in Rome where I've trained and prepared for the last 12 seasons. Malagrotta is a special place for me and for my team – it's the place where I prepared for my first MX2 season, it's the place where I've made all my progress on a bike and where I've learned most about how to win a race and a championship.

Malagrotta is a nice place. It's close to Rome and also close to the sea so the weather and the temperature are almost always good. Since

I first rode there we have made a few changes to the lay-out because both my riding and the bikes have improved. We've managed to change the shape of the corners, the length of the track and we have built a professional watering system – it's like a home from home for me!

Malagrotta has a special atmosphere. I would say a magic and familiar atmosphere. The track is open almost every day to the public but sometimes we keep it closed and reserved just for us, particularly if we need to test some special parts or to prepare for a particular race. All the people who work at Malagrotta are involved with me from big Franco (Francone), the guy who manages the moto club, to Chef De Mango, an ex-motocross rider and bodybuilder who provides us all with some awesome plates of warm pasta between the training sessions.

It is not only the place where I train and test with the bike, Malagrotta is also our home. It's the place where I go when I want to be in a calm place, where I can go if I want to be alone and where I can take the Bobcat out if I feel like doing some redesigning or creating a specific corner to prepare for the next race.

The track consists of different substances. The top is a mix of hardpack and under it's super-soft sand. If you don't water the track it's hard and dusty but if you put a lot of water down it can be really muddy and tricky and that's the reason why Malagrotta is such a special place and where I've rode most in my entire life.

Now that I'm sitting here writing about it it's got me wondering how many motos I've put in there. I've trained there since the end of 2003

for almost eight months a year and I ride two out of every three days. So that's around 150 days a year and usually I do two motos a day so we can estimate around 3,500 motos up until now! Whoa! That's 1750 GPs! Imagine if you could see the amount of fuel, tyres, grips, seat covers, chains and sprockets that I've got through, also the huge amount of work that my mechanics and the team have put in.

It just goes to show that there's only one secret in gaining success and that's that there are no short cuts. Just a huge amount of work, dedication, passion and love for our awesome sport of motocross!

I just want to wish to my little buddy Gianluca Facchetti, who rides in our junior team, a good and fast recovery. Unfortunately, he was involved in a horrible accident with a van while in Belgium so now I wait for him to be back watching me training and giving me good advice! Be strong mate!

Alla prossima amici (see you next time friends)!

A stylized, handwritten signature in red ink that reads 'Tony Cairoli'.



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BRYAN

MACKENZIE



SIX THINGS I'VE DONE THIS SUMMER THAT I HOPE NOT TO REPEAT NEXT SUMMER, OR THE ONE AFTER THAT . . .

hope I don't have four weeks off again. Sometimes as a motocrosser you have to stand on the other side of the fence. Mostly it's forced through injury, but sometimes, just sometimes, you health bar is 100 and you're there because you chose to be.

In the last four weeks I've been there, somewhat forced but somewhat not. Since the re-scheduling of the FatCat Maxxis to October it left a hole in my dairy. Four weeks on the bounce opened up and I had nothing to do but practice a little and work a lot. I really have worked a lot down at the track though as the future Mrs MacKenzie will tell you.

1) Isn't grass cutting the crappiest job of home owner life? Man it sucks, hard. I let it go for about six weeks because I didn't feel it was important enough to warrant taking 30 minutes out of my busy schedule to cut the thing but then it got so long we genuinely looked like the minks of the street. I mean, I don't want to be thought of as upper class but I don't want to be the couple that people think of as bringing down the tone of the neighbourhood either.

When the shame was enough to make me pull the mower out, I could only do one length of the grass before having to empty the box and I couldn't see the present someone's dog had left us so kindly in our luscious garden so I mowed straight over it. That's when it went off like a bomb, fuelling the perception everyone may have had of us due to our untidy inhabitation.

2) I'd definitely not watch the new Adam Sandler movie, Pixels. Not in August, or May, or July, February or ever. To quote comic book guy 'Worst. Movie. Ever.' I'm pretty open minded but a wee bit of me died inside when I finished watching it and realised I had lost a couple of hours of my life and deleted some brain cells. I think in hindsight if I was to go back and be given two options of either A) watching Pixels, or, B) run the gauntlet of shaving my nut sack with an electric hair trimmer with no guard (you all know what I'm on about), I'd go for option B!

3) I'm thinking this will be the last summer I go without a criminal record just so I can avoid getting picked for jury duty again. Jury duty seriously gets in the way of being a motocrosser, as once you're picked, if you don't have a very legitimate reason for not being there you're all in or you get screwed for it. Leading up to the Pontrilas round of the Masters this year I had to attend my call up to sit on the jury and if chosen, it potentially could of messed up my whole week prep and really affected my championship. It went all the way to the wire for me but at the final hurdle I dodged a bullet and got let off the hook as there were more than enough volunteers.

My ass was twitching thinking I was in for the long haul because they predicted it was going to be no less than a week long. So, apparently, if you have a criminal record you don't get the call up – even just a little something minor. Anyone want anything from the shops? It's on me...

4) The water bowser at the track incident. I proper browned it in that scenario and although it wasn't technically me that done it, even from 100 yards away it sounded like a grenade had gone off! My wingman at the track, Baigey, was on watering duties as I manned the fort at signing on, when the water bowser literally imploded!

They work with a vacuum pump which suck all of the air out of the cylinder tank which draws the water up a hose from the pond and fills the tank. On this occasion, the hose blocked with silt from the bottom of the pond unbeknown to Baigey and the pump just kept sucking harder than the prom queen until it turned itself inside out.

The roof of the tank got sucked right to the bottom and it blew a massive hole in the side of the steel which could easily have killed a grazing wildebeest, let alone a human gentleman. The noise was like someone in the pits had just detonated a bomb and it has genuinely sh*t me up about filling the new water bowser. I'll try and learn from someone else's mistake on this occasion.

5) I won't go to Amsterdam again without an actual plan of attack because looking at smoking-hot naked chicks in windows is cool and everything but only the first 100 times. As soon as you start to build up a little bit of rapport with a lady that is behind an inch thick piece of double glazing, just because you've walked past so many times that you now recognise each other and get to the stage of giving an acknowledging head nod in the passing – like you do with guys in the pits – you've ripped the ass out of it.

Unfortunately we were uneducated and underprepared when we went to a mate's stag do in Amsterdam this summer and went there with no schedule or itinerary. The first day was awesome, feeling the lay of the land and touring the city like foot soldiers before smashing a top night and crawling in at 4:30am.

Day two however wasn't quite the same awesome when the only plan was to do what we did on day one, again. Day three...the same. It was like an endurance moto consisting of 'Friday +2' and we really could have done with some pre-organised cool stuff to do in the daytime so we could ride the wave of hilarity into the evenings. Next time we'll do it better...

6) I hope to not keep the DBR team at their desks waiting on my work as I consistently miss deadlines. I'm pretty bad for it I know but I also know they love their job and they've told me before that the longer I keep them there, the more time they get to spend with one another who they love so very much. So, in fact, I'm not that sorry for this at all and a more befitting phrase would be 'you're welcome, team'...

CHARGE TO THE FRONT.

Andrew Short grabs a handful everytime he pulls a holeshot.



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IDENTIFYING WHAT MAKES THE ISDE SO SPECIAL...

There are a number of things that make the ISDE different to just about all other international enduro events. Firstly, there's the history – all 90-odd years of it. Then there's the eclectic mix of riders – some well-paid full timers, others aspirational enthusiasts hoping and praying they're able to battle their way through the six day event.

The six days requires absolute commitment, and not just from its competitors. It's also an event where many of the 'old fashioned' enduro values are lovingly adhered to. Most notably that riders have to work on their own bikes.

Over the last 10 years or so the ISDE's importance has waned somewhat. Some nations, riders, teams and manufacturers still see it as the special and hugely important event that it is, for others time, energy and money are invested elsewhere.

Although the event doesn't bring together the best riders from each country like it once did, it still brings together a truly exciting mix of riders – young and old, in good shape and not, fast and slow. And they're all treated the same.

Being at the start area of any six days, watching riders rushing out of the parc ferme to get their bikes into the work area in double quick time is something folk with a tendency for bikes with lights on have been doing for decades. I appreciate that it might not sound that exciting, but take it from me it ensures each day starts with a bang.

Each day at the ISDE is top and tailed with riders working on their bikes. Always has been. Riders fitting tyres, making basic running repairs, some having to tackle mechanical tasks way beyond their comfort zone. No matter how good a day's result is, it's no result at all until mechanical duties have been done and a bike's safely within the parc ferme.

Rider's working on their bikes is a fundamental part of the fabric of enduro sport. Yes, the sea of bikes that fills the parc ferme at any given ISDE is impressive, but it's the getting hands on with machinery as each day starts and ends that ensures much of the six day magic.

At Enduro World Championship events there's no pre-event work area, although there is talk of it making a return in 2016. EWC races start with riders waiting, patiently, on a starting ramp surrounded by broly birds. It's dull, really dull. Yet for the past 10 years that's how it's been – riders wheeling their machines up onto the start ramp before heading off for the day.

Maybe it's because there's no work area at EWC events that the often-frantic mechanical shenanigans at the start and finish of each day at the ISDE seem so interesting. Or maybe it's simply because it's the correct way to start and finish an event?

Removing the pre-event work area and allowing mechanics to work on bikes in the EWC was introduced to make the sport more professional, to allow TV crews to interview

riders instead of them – the riders – being face-down, arse-up trying to fit a new gearbox sprocket. In reality it meant that unless wheels were turning all excitement was stripped away.

This year's ISDE is an important one. It's the 90th running of the event. It's going to be the first green event in three years – Argentina and Sardinia were both seriously dry and dusty. And it might well be a wet one, which will make things interesting.

It also sees the return of British teams to the event. Fielding both Trophy and Junior Trophy teams GB has thrown its hat into both rings with two strong squads. With the right kind of weather and a bit of good fortune there's every reason to believe that GB's return to the ISDE will be a successful one.

All the best lads...



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DANIEL GROVE



Photo by Scorch Images

OUR FACTORY FAN'S LIST OF LIKEYS AND NO-LIKEYS...

As we all know, motocross is the best thing in the world! It's way more than just a sport, whether it's riding or racing ourselves or watching the guys at the top of their game in the GPs and AMA Nationals. There are just so many elements to motocross to like – it could be buying a new or newer bike, wearing new riding gear, a new helmet, meeting your favourite rider, riding on perfectly prepared tracks or catching a sweet pass during a race on your GoPro...

However, the feelings you'll get from it aren't like clearing a big double for the first time all the time and there are a few issues going on that could do with being addressed to make motocross the ultimate sport out there.

So in no particular order here's my list of things that I like as much as pulling a holeshot at a mud race followed by the things that I dislike as much as crashing in the second corner of the very same mud race...

Likes

Characters

Just like in the '90s we seem to be getting to know quite a few characters among the pro ranks and it's not down to social media. Cooper Webb, Valentin Guillod, Tim Gasjer and even older guys in the form of Tommy Searle and Kevin Strijbos have been quite outspoken in one way or another this season.

Romain Febvre, Guillod and Gasjer show pure emotion in their podium interviews which is just what the sport needs and who saw Webb's podium interview after race one at the Washougal National? I don't condone it but it's better than hearing who his sponsors are every weekend.

Guillod was racing IMBAs two years ago out the back of an old Merc 608 and since 'that scrub' at the Spanish GP earlier this year he's clocked up a few moto wins, beating Jeffery Herlings straight up in the process. That's an elite list!

He'll age out of MX2 after this season which is a huge shame and I agree with him, the cut-off it should be 25 not 23. He's re-signed with his current team for MXGP next year, turning down much more money from other teams so he clearly has a smart head on his Swiss shoulders by sticking with a team he's happy with...

MXGP

You've got Febvre throwing his 450 around like a toy, six guys with a legitimate shot at the MX2 crown and more first-time winners this season than any other in recent memory. Now if we can just lower the entry fee a little and fill the gate up we'll all be in for a treat.

Racing

No matter how many laps you ride at the local practice track, nothing comes close to actually lining up on a gate and racing. And who knows, you may end up with a plastic trophy as a reward for the time spent training and working on your trusty steed.

I can barely remember where I last practised but I can recall races from 10 years ago like it was yesterday – although I have a few plastic trophies as a memory jogger!

People

There are some seriously awesome people involved in motocross and we must all know someone who just knows what's what without the BS, who you can talk to about motocross all the time and they share the same opinions as you. Also, I'm lucky enough to be able to discuss technical bike stuff with a main dealer via text if I need to in the evening and even weekends so I'm pretty lucky in that respect – I just need to supply them with cake.

Silly season

It's that time of year again! This time last year was all about RV and now there are a lot of changes going on that have yet to be confirmed.

Stefan Everts changing brands to head-up the Suzuki MXGP team, Desalle moving to Kawasaki, Searle going to Dixon Kawi, a new Stateside 250F Suzuki team, Pro Circuit moving away from Thor gear, Chad Reed to Yamaha and lastly Max Anstie supposedly moving on despite having a race-winning bike under him. If I was him I'd stick to what I knew I could win on given that 2016 will be his last season in MX2...

Not taking it so seriously

I used to be real weird about eating the right food on race days. Not anymore. Since then my results have improved and if you get your work done in the week a bacon sandwich on race day morning won't make any difference to your race results.

I know a former AMCA champion that got the job done on cups of tea and bacon and egg rolls on race day. True story.

Prepped air filters

Invest in at least five, oil them all up in one go (and keep in air tight bags) and wash them all in one go too. It won't be a weekly chore then and will benefit you and your machine at dusty tracks as you can change one during the day. Okay, so it could end up being a weekly chore after all but at least your motor – and wallet – won't suffer...

Excuses

Not sure if this belongs in the 'Like' section but I like this as it's just ridiculous. I recently read a press release about why a top rider didn't take part in a round of their championship after qualification. Apparently, the bike wasn't suited to the track. It was a motocross bike and it was at a motocross track. I was going to scratch my head on that one but I'm receding enough as it is...

Dislikes

Roost

I think everyone can relate to this! It's especially bad on tracks that have been ripped up but not watered enough where you and your bike get a hammering. However, you can't overtake by following so you'll quickly learn to find other lines – but sometimes you don't have a choice and you just have to deal with it. Ouch!

Injuries

Whether it's your own body that's taken a hit or one of the top guys in the world, it's never a good situation. Sounds like the FIM are on the case and are bringing in stricter rules about riders wearing full body protection next season in MXGP so we may see a slight reduction of injuries – fingers crossed – and then how good will the racing be!

Sandbaggers

We all know those guys who ride in a class lower than they should. Just check out the race results. Yeah, they look cool winning by 30 seconds but when they have to move up the roost won't hurt them nearly as much as the hits their pride will be taking.

Stolen bikes

Not sure that I have to elaborate on this one...

Schoolboy dads (and selected mothers)

We've all seen those dads running around screaming at their kids like they're the leader of a district on The Hunger Games. If they behaved like that while doing the school run they'd have their kids taken away.

Home-schooled kids

If you're home-schooled and winning every race you enter including Loretta Lynn's and the FIM Junior World Championship the chances are you'll make some decent money out of racing dirt bikes long-term. If not stay in school and get yourself a basic education. Look at Tim Gasjer and Adam Sterry. They stayed in school and are doing great so there's no reason to be home-schooled.

Social media

We've all seen those people who take a screenshot of the weather forecast and post it on the Facebook page of a race or practice track organiser? Do they really think that the organiser hasn't checked the forecast?

Perhaps they should become an organiser to realise how helpful they are being by giving valuable weather updates that are otherwise hard to find out online...

Racing 250Fs at 14

Kids being able to do this has to change! All organisations in the UK need to get together and make a rule that doesn't allow under 16s to race 250Fs anywhere.

Obviously, some kids grow up quick but a year or two racing a 125 won't hurt them and they'll be better off for it in the long run as they'll learn how to carry corner speed much better. Not to mention the transition being much smoother and safer from an 85 to a 125, then on to 250F.

Plus it's a lot kinder on the old credit card...

Daniel Grove

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JAKE

NICHOLLS

MORE SETBACKS FOR JAKE BUT HE'S STILL FIGHTING HARD...

Hello everyone! I hope you're all doing alright. I'm in a bit of a weird frame of mind as I'm typing out this column, what with the disastrous week for motorsport we've had and the fact that I'm still not fully fit.

My back is finally getting better. It's been seven weeks since my relatively small crash in Latvia but I only got to the bottom of the pain last week. I had x-rays initially which showed up nothing and I just guessed it was just sore because I'd had a good smash but after racing Loket and struggling a bit, then onto Lommel where I couldn't even stand up correctly on the bike, I went home and had an MRI done.

All that showed up was an old stress fracture so I carried on having physio, acupuncture and all of that and waited a couple of days to get a CT scan which is basically a 4d x-ray. In the meantime I didn't even get one per cent better. I had the CT but then the specialist who was looking after me went away for a couple of weeks.

After days of pestering him I finally got him to call me back and give me some answers. The outcome was no better – 'stress fractures from when you were eight years old disturbed the area causing pain blah blah blah'. I was like, 'how the hell is that supposed to help me? I need answers, I wanna race'...

A few days later I went to see the osteopath again, who works closely with said specialist. I got a much better explanation from him and it now makes sense! The area of the old stress fractures has basically never hardened like the rest of our bones do when we grow up and nerve endings have found their way into these ever so slight fractures which never normally give me grief. But where I've come down with

such a thud I've hit this slightly sensitive area and smacked that bone pretty hard, causing it to bruise and create fluid around the area which then stays inflamed for a while.

I don't like taking pharmaceutical pills to be honest and it's only when I'm really in pain that I bother. But he urged me to take a big daily dose of anti-inflammatory tablets because the damage is so deep into my back and on the front side of my vertebra so it takes three days for the tablets to even help the area. So that's that to be honest...

They definitely seem to have helped. The best thing is I'm able to work on my fitness and I'm riding a couple days a week but just steady to keep my eye in. I'm hoping next week I will be able to push on but I'm doubtful for Preston to be honest. I've got nothing to gain by going there less than 100 per cent fit and getting a top six result. I only want to go there if I can get on the podium.

I've lost my ride for next year so I'm job hunting at the moment as well. So the last thing I want to do is go there and not show my full potential. I've had a rough couple of seasons due to injuries – as I'm sure regular readers are aware – and a mixture of that and more overseas races has caused me to lose my GP ride.

I'm absolutely gutted to be honest. When I got told – the Wednesday before Lommel – I honestly wanted to quit the sport there and then, I felt so letdown after all the effort I've put into it throughout my career. But since then I've come around to the idea of proving all the doubters wrong.

I can't wait to be honest. I've never had so much fire in my belly since Billy Mac once told me I would never be any good and that I'd never get on a GP podium. So we'll see...

Whoever I'm riding for, or wherever that may be, I'll be giving it 100 per cent no matter what. My goal has always been to be world champion and I will do whatever it takes to get back into the series.

Before I mentioned that it was a tough weekend for motorsport as two of my good friends had serious accidents – Darcy Ward the speedway rider and my old team-mate Steven Frossard. I would like to wish them all the best – I was very upset when I heard the news as I'm close with both.

Also I've always stayed in touch with Marvin Musquin since he went to the States and I watched him lose his title on Saturday night when his bike cut out which was sad. Then I heard his older brother (who I raced with when starting GPs) also had a bad accident so I want to wish them all well. I'm sending all my strength and courage their way. Life can be cruel but I just see it as I sign that you have to make the most of the opportunities you have and don't hold back.

Cheers for reading folks! Check my social media channels for more updates on my status for next year. I just hope I won't be driving a MAN tipper for my old man...



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Photo: J. P. Acvedo

KTM



KTM FACTORY RACING



Shaun Simpson has an epic month with a GP win and an AMA Nationals appearance that netted him fourth overall

OUR ROVING REPORTERS SNIFF OUT THIS MONTH'S TOP STORIES.

MXoN fever is catching. More or less every country has released details of their three-man team line-ups and speculation as to who is going to place where has already begun.

The defending champions – France – will have a strong advantage racing on home soil at Ernee. The natural amphitheatre surroundings will add to the atmosphere as they go for back-to-back titles. Home advantage aside, they have to be the strongest team on paper anyway with probable MXGP world and vice world champions Romain Febvre and Gautier Paulin, strongly supported by AMA 250MX runner-up Marvin Musquin. This team would undoubtedly be a strong bet for the title on any track in any country.

Belgium was supposed to be unchanged as the 2014 runners-up entered Van Horebeek (MX1), Stribos (MX3) and Lieber (MX2). But a crash at the GP of Lombardia (Mantova) has put Stribos out for the season and his replacement is a toss-up between some current MX2 and EMX250 riders or a couple of Belgian MX1 championship riders. This has got to significantly change their odds for winning – or even stepping on the podium again.

GB on the other hand has got a very strong team. Reppin' the Union Jack will be Simmo (MX1), Anstie (MX2) and Deano Wilson (MX3). Simmo and Anstie are currently in the form of their lives and consistently putting in top-tier results every time they line up so class podiums from each of them in Ernee is well within the equation.

Wilson is coming back from injury and has only competed the last three AMA Nationals but had a couple of strong finishes inside the top-10 to show he's still got some weight in that right elbow to twist it hard. Funnily enough, this team has one very strong linking factor between all three riders – Shaun and Max both get their physical conditioning training done by Dean's cousin, Kev McGuire, of Step1 Fitness. That will only add to the camaraderie and team atmosphere. A podium is well within the picture – fingers crossed.

Sadly, Italy won't be in contention for the Nations title this year. Despite the fact that Antonio Cairoli is expected to return from injury to race the USGP in Glen Helen, he will not race the MXoN which is actually a week later. With the greatest of respect to the chosen Italian team it's pretty weak this year: Samuele

Bernardini, Michele Cervellini and Ivo Monticelli will ride for their country with no Philippaerts, Guarneri or Cairoli available for duty.

Kenny Roczen will be absent this year as he wants to take a break. Maybe he has a lot of sh*t to clean up after the sh*t storm that likely blew through his place after his dad spoke maybe too openly in a very brutal interview with a German publication. Kenny's old man pretty much ripped into the RCH team calling them out as unprofessional and useless with no regard to his son Kenny's career – the ultimate schoolboy dad move. Germany will have Max Nagl back though and his wing men will be Henry Jacobi and Dennis Ullrich. I don't expect a repeat of 2013 when they won the title.

Ben Townley is coming off the retiree's bench for the race to rep the black and white of New Zealand. Townley had a killer day here back in '05 when the Nations last visited Ernee when he diced with the big guns of 450 motocross that day. He has been riding a couple of the Australian Nationals this season for the official Honda team over there and has been landing on the box frequently. He's clearly still in great shape with a ton of speed.

USA will field a strong team, again! Although



Romain Febvre takes another step towards world title #1 with victory at Mantova

it's probably not their strongest team possible. It will be a full Yamaha US line-up with Barcia, J-Martin and Cooper Webb taking the weight of America on their shoulders. Webb will ride the second 450 in MX3 as the reigning US 250MX champion – Martin – will ride his familiar 250. It's a youthful team this year with Barcia being the more experienced member and team leader, the position Ryan Dungey usually fills.

The dark horses coming in have got to be the Swiss. Valentin Guillod is leading the team in MX1, Jeremy Seewer taking the MX2 ride and they're being overlooked by Arnaud Tonus on the MX3 ride. We all know how good Guillod and Tonus are, and Seewer has been in the thick of the MX2 GP championship hunt this season too with podiums coming quite often. He's definitely established himself well inside the top seven or eight guys every week. Team Switzerland could very well land on the podium!

It's no real surprise as to who Ireland are sending – Martin Barr, Graeme Irwin and Stuart Edmonds. All have been riding well this season on MX1 bikes but Irwin is taking the MX2 place for the team. The sticking point for these guys is making it straight into the 'A' final as they are historically the 'B' final destroyers. This

year though, I predict they will get straight in, because, on paper, this is a good team. I'm supporting the Irish, too. Great bunch of dudes that deserve a trouble free weekend. So let's see what Ireland really is packing for the rest of the world.

It's an undisputed fact that Shaun Simpson is Great Britain's leading MX1 off-road motorcycle rider. Simmo has had an absolutely bitching month starting by banking a 1-1 at the GP of Lommel before flying to the states to compete in his first US motocross national where he put a fourth place trophy into his hand luggage riding a factory 2016 KTM 450.

When he landed back in Belgium, the opportunity to continue riding a factory whip – which is totally unobtainable to mere mortals like us – from KTM arose which he duly accepted and ran down another fourth overall at the MXGP of Lombardia (Mantova). SS24 will definitely be on similar material for next season although it's not known which team that will be with.

Max Anstie is another home-grown talent who is hitting the prime form of his life. At this point last year Max was happy just to finish races on his Yamaha but now on his DRT

Kawasaki, he's not happy unless he's winning. In the last four GPs, Max has won all the motos (and qualifying races) bar one – which he was leading at the time before a crash. He has propelled himself to third place in the championship and with his current form it's still possible he could claim the title.

Ryan Dungey captured the 450 MX title in the USA early this year to add to his 450SX title for 2015 too. We mentioned at the start of the year that Dungey had moved to trainer Aldon Baker and to keep an eye on his progress this season. Dungey dominated both indoor and outdoor series to further conclude that Aldon Baker has something going on over there and possesses a certain magic when it comes to preparing motocross athletes.

The 250 AMA MX championship was primed to go all the way in a dog fight between defending champion Jeremy Martin and fast Frenchie Marvin Musquin. Less than a handful of points separated them going into the final weekend of their season but only two short laps into the penultimate moto, Musquin had the misfortune of having his only bike malfunction of the year. The DNF more or less gave team Martin the nod to rip their #1 t-shirts out of the >>>

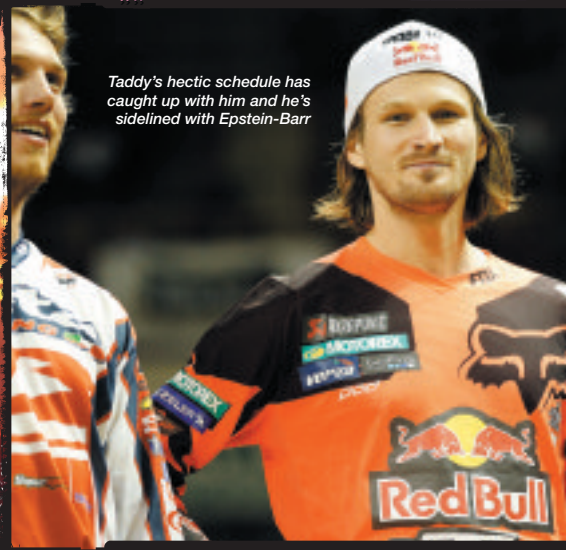
Tickets are on sale now for next year's Arenacross tour



This handsome bunch will be representing Team GB at the ISDE



Taddy's hectic schedule has caught up with him and he's sidelined with Epstein-Barr



bag which they then duly wore after the final moto.

The MXGP of Assen is going to be quite the spectacle. A makeshift track made out of soft, white sand is being constructed over the top of the MotoGP circuit's tarmac to punish anyone who is silly enough to throw a leg over their bike for it. It's a unique concept to hold it at such a massive venue with excellent infrastructure but it will be interesting to see if the grandstands fill out.

Thanks in part to his clean sweep in Mantova, Romain Febvre heads to Assen with the realistic goal of securing his maiden world title. Sitting 101 points in front of countryman, Gautier Paulin, he only needs to finish the day not more than two points behind the HRC star and the title is his.

Mel Pocock made a return to the track at the Kawasaki try-out day at FatCat. It was the first time riding again after his savage accident at round one of the Maxxis British championship where he lost his thumb and very nearly his whole hand. It was great to see Mel on the bike again and he commented that he hardly noticed the missing digit.

The transfer list on the UK scene is quiet this

year with only a couple of movers and shakers known at this point. Lewis Trickett is to leave MBO Yamaha and join Buildbase Honda for next season where he'll team up with Kristian Whatley. Trickett will contest the MX2 class whilst Whatley continues in MX1. It's expected that Buildbase will field another MX2 rider alongside Trickett, too.

Apico Husky are staying with Steven Clarke for next year and will add a new rider to their stable. They don't plan on chasing any European championship success in 2016 and expect to race only in the UK in two domestic championships.

Billy Mac is back riding a DRT Kawasaki 450. As far as I'm aware, Dixon is just assisting Billy get back on his feet in the UK and loaning him a bike and some swag to allow him to start training for god knows what – a comeback maybe? He doesn't have any concrete plans for the moment but if he feels good and competitive enough on the bike in the next month we may see him a little more often.

Arenacross is coming back again, too! Returning to the UK's leading concert venues, promoters e22 Sports plan for 11 nights of action this year: Glasgow, Birmingham, and

Newcastle join Belfast in hosting two nights of indoor racing each and are bookended by Manchester and Wembley Arena. They have amended the classes a little but the Pros will remain as Pros with the choice to race 450 or 250. The all-new Pro Lites class will incorporate the Rookies class and put a cap on the age limit of 23 while the two 85cc classes will now be combined to create an 85cc Super Mini Youth class. The 65cc class will remain unchanged...

After the back-to-back races of the Enduro World Championship and the Red Bull Romaniacs, the world of enduro took a collective sigh and generally 'downed tools' for the month of August. Internationally speaking there wasn't a lot on but after a couple of weeks in neutral the batteries are now charged as everyone begins the big end of year push.

Times are really good right now for those Brits contesting the European Enduro Championship. The penultimate round of the series in Jämsä, Finland proved a belter for KTM's Tom Sagar with the Brit claiming the lead in the overall championship standings. With closest rival Maurizio Micheluz hampered with a shoulder injury, Sagar placed third overall on day one before winning day two to secure

Gautier Paulin is desperate to lead Team France home to victory in the MXoN at Ernee



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Spanish brand Bultaco is back with a far-from-ordinary comeback model. The new Brinco is a high-spec electric mountain bike due to hit UK shores later this year and it will get its premier UK unveiling at the Show. Launched to celebrate Bultaco's return to the international motorcycle market, the new Bultaco Brinco is a pedal-assisted electric mountain bike with a 2.6bhp motor incorporated into the back wheel, producing 44.2lbft of torque – it's set to be something of a talking point.

Staying with the Spanish theme, and over to the world of trials, the Vertigo Combat will also get its UK exhibition debut and will be available for two-stroke fans to try out for size. Multi world trials champion Dougie Lampkin has been instrumental in the development of the machine and its agility and capabilities will be ably demonstrated by six-times British Trials Champion James Dabill in daily Arena Trials.

Elsewhere on the electric front, Mecatecno will have its range of kids' trials bikes on display and available to test, as will Electric Motion with its novice and intermediate selection and, for the more experienced rider, the KTM Freerider E is sure to be of interest.

Advance tickets are on sale now and can be obtained by following the 'on sale now' ticket link on www.dirtbikeshow.co.uk or you can call Customer Services on 01507 529529.

a 27-point lead in the series with just the final round in Germany remaining. Time to cross all fingers and toes and hope Sagar seals the deal in October.

Elsewhere in Finland it was an up and down event for Husqvarna's Joe Wootton. A double Junior E2/E3 winner last time out in Croatia, Wootton struggled in the brutally demanding Finnish terrain. Fourth and sixth saw him slip 12-points behind championship leader Jeremy Carpentier. Similarly Lee Sealey had a weekend of mixed fortunes in the Junior Under 20 class. After a bad run on day one he bounced back to place second on day two.

Moving forward and it's all systems go for September with the Red Bull Megawatt in Poland and of course the ISDE in Slovakia. Happening the weekend before the ISDE begins – the Megawatt is the next major extreme enduro on the calendar.

Sidelined with Epstein-Barr Virus, Taddy Blazusiak has become a reluctant spectator at his home race. A close second to Taddy in 2014, Jonny Walker certainly starts as favourite but in 2015 he's got a lot of competition to handle. Husqvarna's Graham Jarvis and Alfredo Gomez will be in the mix along with Andreas

Lettenbichler but interestingly a number of EWC regulars are also in the fray too. Skipping the ISDE, Alex Salvini, Giacomo Redondi and also Joakim Junggren will dip a toe in this Polish extreme enduro for the first time.

Once the Megawatt is put to bed it's immediately straight across to Slovakia for the ISDE. With a bit of a depleted entry among some of the usual top performing nations, this year's edition of the race appears to be wide open. France are missing Antoine Meo – rally commitments – plus Pela Renet, Christophe Nambotin and Johnny Aubert are all injured. At their weakest in recent years, will we see the USA or Australia finally topple the French?

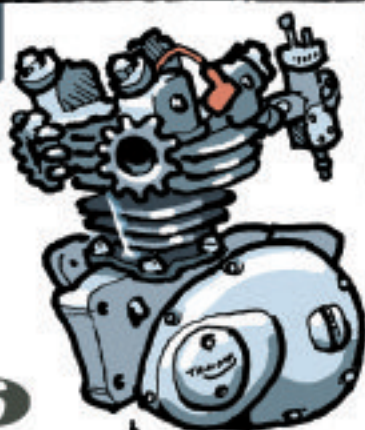
But don't count out Finland either. With Eero Remes leading that team, they could deliver big things too. And of course team Great Britain can't be counted out of a potential podium result too. David Knight – the winner of the last Slovakian ISDE in 2005 – will be joined by an on form Tom Sagar, EWC Junior class leader Jamie McCanney plus Joe Wootton, Jack Rowland and Jamie Lewis. In the Junior ranks, Robert Johnson, James Dent, Josh Gotts and Lee Sealey fly the Union Jack colours. Pin it to win it lads...



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6



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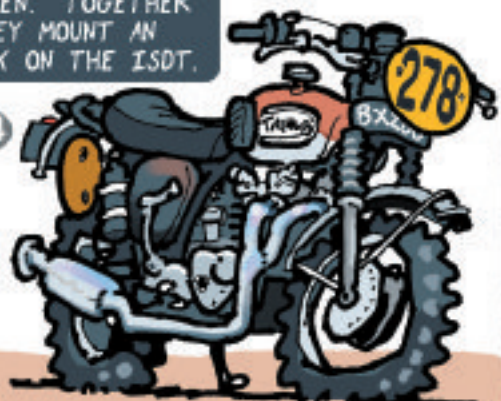
IT STILL
DOESN'T
LOOK LIKE
A BOXER

1963



SHE IS AS ONE WITH
MCQUEEN. TOGETHER
THEY MOUNT AN
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1964



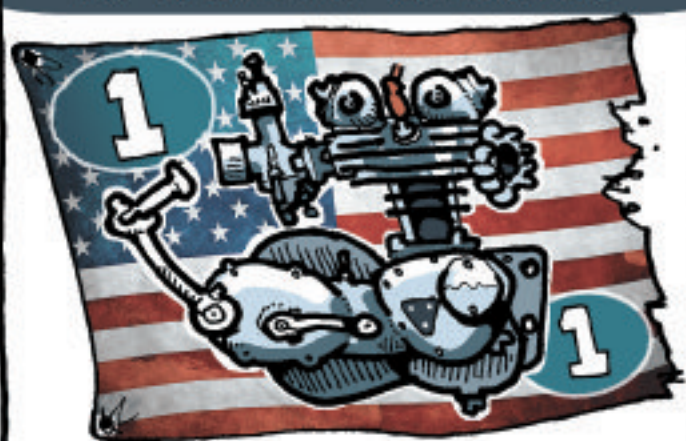
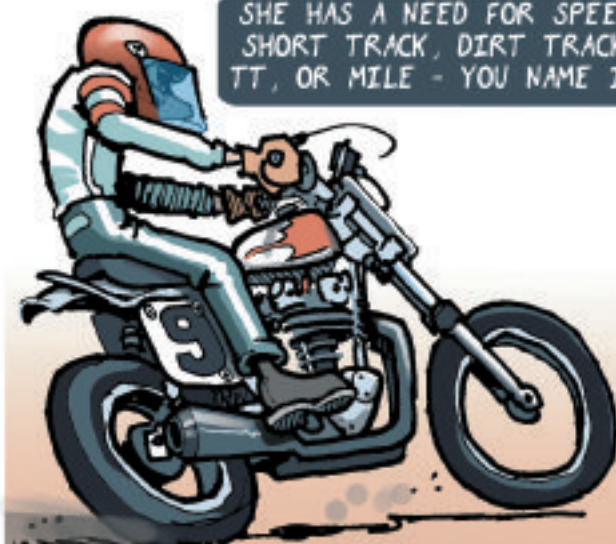
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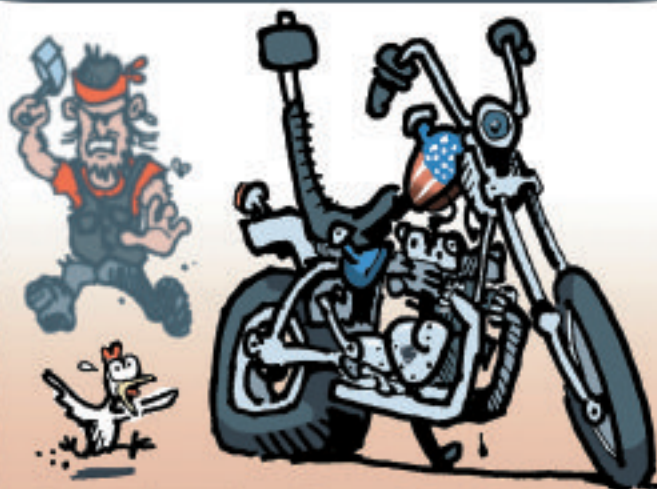


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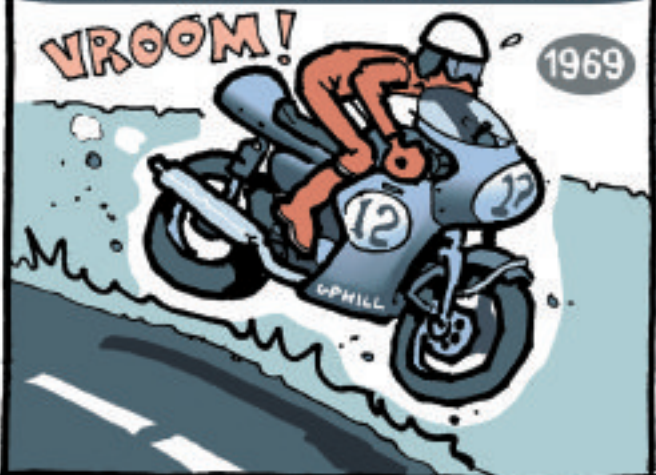
FAME LEADS TO TEMPTATION. SADLY SHE FALLS IN WITH THE WRONG CROWD ...



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1969



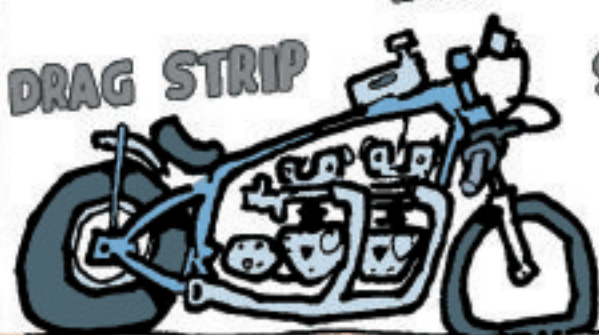
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**SIDECAR
MX**

HILLCLIMB



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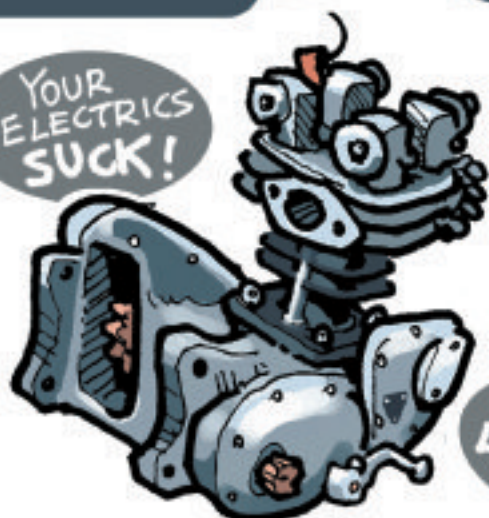
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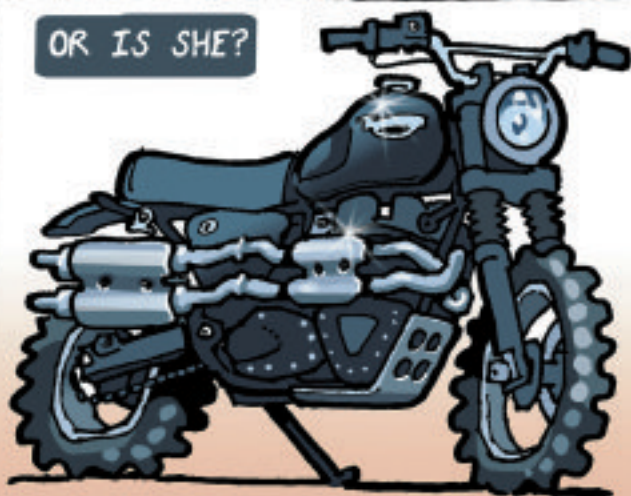


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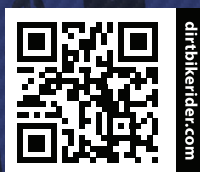
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A Scotsman in New York!

FROM GP WINNER TO AMA ROOKIE IN THE SPACE OF
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Interview by Adam Wheeler Photos by Frank Happen and Simon Cudby





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For one week in August Hitachi Construction Machinery Revo KTM's Shaun Simpson felt the international motocross community revolve entirely around him. The British Champion astounded MXGP followers by battling his way to 1-1 at the roughest Lommel ever and then had AMA Lucas Oil AMA Pro National fans checking the number of '274' running in fourth position at Unadilla.

Shaun was busy playing around with GoPros to document the trip but we also asked him to snap away with his new iPhone 6 and then tell us about the experience.

"It was all down to Jason from Dyce Carriers a friend and personal sponsor. He had known about the idea to race a National for some time as well and had been sitting at home thinking 'if we don't do something about it now then it will get too late'.

"So I'd say it was about two months before the race when he sent me an email and said he'd looked at flights, hotels and asked what I thought. I checked it out and it all tied-up nicely so I was like 'let's do it'.

"I asked if Jason could book it and then I'd pay him back and he became like my travel agent! He made the trip package and had

actually been to New York in May so already had an idea for hotels in mind. It was great having him take care of that side and all the bookings. Off the back of that and through a friend of a friend in Aberdeen that's when I had the TWMA sponsorship to do the race and that's what really secured it. When the flights were booked there was no turning back.

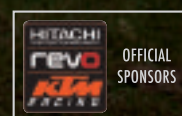
"The entry process was a piece of cake. I was able to ride on my FIM licence, which was handy for a one-off event. There was a section of the paperwork that had to be notarised by an AMA or FIM official. So I sent it off and they received it within 10 days but I had a message back saying they had to be notarised over here.

"At the Grand Prix of Sweden I asked Andy Summers (FIM Official) to do that for me and mailed them again. It took over two weeks this time to get to the USA and there was a month cut-off time before the race and it was starting to get close to the limit. At one point I was thinking 'I've ballsed this up' but that's when I had contact with Jeff Canfield and Davey Coombs at MX Sports and they said if push-comes-shove then it could be done on the day. Even though I sent notarised papers I actually did more at Unadilla. In all honesty I could have rocked up, paid my 330 dollars entry fee, done the admin and that would have been it. It was like entering a club race.

"I don't believe I was thinking about being 'an MXGP rider' in the AMA before we went to Lommel. I was purely going for fun and the experience and for the amazing opportunity from Roger De Coster to go and ride one of his bikes. I guess the closer it got the more the pressure crept up. The only negative thoughts I had were like 'what if I cannot go because I've tweaked my ankle?'.

"Once Lommel happened I was quite wrapped up in that and it was only when I got on the plane did I think: 'sh*t, this could go either way now.' I could just go over and experience it but then everybody will be expecting me to do well. There would be more hype, more 'factory' and no excuses to do badly. I just tried to blank it out. I kept saying to everyone that I was there for fun and because I kept it like that I think the result came. Having fun is a bit vague and everybody seems to say that, I'd like to put it another way but it is the mindset that I took into the race and adopted every minute I was there. I've been calling it a mini-dream and that's what it was.

"I don't really think I was nervous. It was that busy and there wasn't much time to reflect and a fair bit more travelling. There wasn't really any down-time, which is a contrast to the GPs. I was apprehensive about the result perhaps." >>



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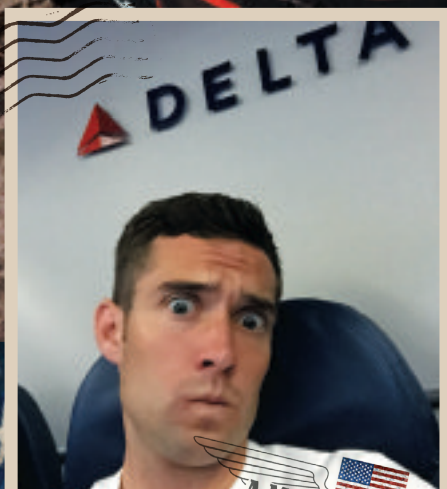
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“TWO OF THOSE WERE FULL OF KIT. I GAVE ONE TO JASON’S BOYS. NORMALLY I FILL ONE FOR A GRAND PRIX. WE ONLY HAD A 23 KILO ALLOWANCE FOR THE PLANE. I PACKED HELMETS, BOOTS AND MY SEAT AND THEN FILLED ONE WITH CLOTHES AND DAD HAD ANOTHER ONE FOR SMALL TOOLS AND HIS PIT BAG, TAPE, HAND GUARDS AND STUFF WE’D NEED.”



“I think we underestimated how hard it would have been to prep a bike over there without any support from KTM. I think we would have needed another four bags otherwise. An engine is 30 kilos alone and there could have been complications taking it to the U.S. Then you have to think about the size of taxis, hire cars and even carrying everything.

“There were six of us travelling and we already had all of our hands full – we had bags attached to bags. It would have been a major stress trying to take more stuff and I think doing the race as we did was the only way unless you organise freight. If we do it again and I’m running similar bikes to the U.S. guys then I think the only thing I would take is my suspension because that is a very personal touch and the key part of the set-up that really needs to be on-point. It is about fine-tuning.”

“We flew from Brussels to JFK and it was eight hours there and seven-and-a-half coming back. It didn’t feel like we were travelling for a GP, as would normally be the case. It was just over a day after Lommel and it felt like some sort of holiday. Having Jason, his wife Candy and the kids meant that the conversation wasn’t

all about bikes and the family obviously wanted to enjoy New York as well. If it had just been Dad and I then it would have been a basic trip to Unadilla but instead we had a good look around and went to some fancy places for tea like Gallaghers in New York that charged \$60 for a steak! Thanks to them we had more of an experience from it all.”



“I had been briefly in 2007 on a trip with the boys to see the Nations at Budds Creek. It was Dad’s first time and I don’t think he liked it! He said he’d only come back for a few days with my Mum as she’s always wanted to go; I thought that was nice of him. I also think that after a couple of days in Manhattan then it’s enough.”

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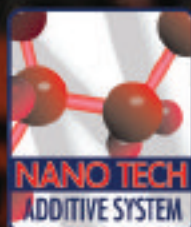
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"On Monday after the race we went deeper into Central Park and I'd only really been to the periphery before. We rented bikes for an hour and did a full lap and it was so nice to find this bit of what felt like 'countryside' in such a built-up area and so much chaos. There were a lot of people doing exercise. I think that was one of my favourite moments in New York – you



were in this amazing, busy place but there was also this tranquillity as well.

"We saw the Statue of Liberty up-close on what was a nice, free little trip on the Staten Island ferry. Seeing Ground Zero and the waterfalls was an experience. It was the thing that blew-me-away the most back in '07 because you are not quite prepared for the size



of the area. You can see planes quite close overhead arriving into the airports and your imagination just goes. It is almost too much to comprehend.

"We went to a West End musical, the Book of Mormon, and that was a first for me as well."

"PULLING INTO THE TRACK FOR THE FIRST TIME ON PRESS DAY WAS PROBABLY MY MOST NERVOUS MOMENT."



"It took about four hours to drive to Unadilla, not accounting for traffic out-and-then-into Manhattan. We went across the bridge on the way out and came through the tunnel on the way back. It was a cool trip and I set up my GoPro on the bonnet of the van (I need to get someone to make a little edit of the footage as I collected loads over the days).

"We kept laughing about how many opportunities there were to stop and eat. We took a few unintentional 'diversions'. I was sitting in the back and I'm normally pretty good at navigating but between Jason who was driving and my Dad who was shotgun – two full grown adults – they managed to take a few wrong turns and I ended up getting the blame somehow. I was just chilling in the back trying to watch 'Tony Cairoli: The Movie' when I was shouted at for not keeping an eye on their directions!

"Once we reached Binghampton, where we were staying, I was surprised to see the Amish by the side of the road with their horses and carts and their houses that seemed like huts. Candy was telling me all these stories about their self-sufficient lifestyle and it was a bit mind-blowing.

"Coming up to the track you are driving on an A-road and suddenly you crest a hill and – bam – it's there. RVs and pick-ups everywhere. There were 1100 amateurs racing on a track on the other side of the hill so it was rammed."



"This was the chalet where we stayed from press day until after the race and there were no duvets or anything and it was absolutely freezing in there and wasn't anything fancy. Jason had to weigh up between distance from the track and a nice hotel but we ended up



going to Utica – where there was a Holiday Inn – to eat most of the time anyway."

"It was a stress getting in...and quite funny. We got to the gate and I said 'I'm Shaun Simpson, I'm here to ride press day for Factory KTM' I thought that would automatically get me in but this American voice came back at me saying 'have you got any tickets? If not you'll have to pay'. I said I'm not paying and she said she'd radio through.

"She asked my name again and where I was from and wrote it down and then got on the comms and said 'Hey Karen – I've got a Shaun Simpson from Scotland'". I was

creasing myself. I also had someone else call me Shane Simpson. So I was Shane from Scotland for the rest of the time. I was telling everyone about it. The pass rigmarole happened again the next day and it took us an hour to get tickets and they handed them over reluctantly. It felt like we'd come all that way and wouldn't even be able to get in the pits.

"Pulling into the track for the first time on press day was probably my most nervous moment. I walked over to suss-out what was going on and I looked inside the awning and wasn't really getting any cuttings from anyone until somebody looked up and said 'ah, Shaun!' I told him I was relieved somebody recognised me and it broke the ice."

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"From that moment on the people could not have been nicer to me and I felt comfortable right away. We offered to get the bike sorted outside of the factory awning but they wouldn't have it, and said we should use Dungey's mechanic's tools and work area.

"We felt right at home. We were right next to Wilson. We put the stickers on, changed the seat and the bars and from then on there were press guys floating in and doing photos. Jason and Dad were on the case and there were plenty of people coming by to say hello and even some fans congratulating me on Lommel. It felt like there was a bit of hype.

"I did feel 'factory'. I didn't even have to wash my boots! It seemed like there was someone to do something and every rider has their space in the truck with helmet driers and sections for gear and lockers. From the moment I arrived the treatment was great. Jason did a lot of my 'man-friend' work! Another detail is that I had to install the mandatory 'hat's off' system that is like a pad that goes on the liner and pushes your head out of the helmet in the event of a crash.

"I caught up with some other riders. Zach [Osborne] first of all as he was at press day. I hadn't seen him since he'd been married and become a father. Pourcel blanked me altogether but that's just his way. I lined up next to him for the press day session and gave him the nod and he just looked away. I actually smiled to myself and thought 'you are a dick...'.

"I spoke to Arnaud [Tonus] and Marvin [Musquin] for a good while and Marvin's wife was really helpful. A couple of mechanics like Olly Stone who gave me the tour around the



Pro Circuit million dollar rig with the engine racks. I met Mitch Payton who knew all about Lommel and that was quite cool. It was nice to have those familiar faces there.

"I felt sorry for Tonus. His bike broke in first practice and they reckon that he came back and fell asleep in his chair, which is what had happened at supercross and they knew something was not right. It turns out his conditioning had gone to sh*t all over again. He is such a nice kid, such good style and so much talent but with no breaks at all. Dungey was really cool and offered some time in his camper if I needed air-con or food.

"It sounds stupid but I almost idolised some of these guys. Supercross is a completely different thing to what we do, but you see them and you cannot help but put them on a pedestal. The truth is that – having ridden with them – we are not that far 'off'. Had I done two or three rounds and got into the whole American thing then I feel I could have been pushing for podiums there as well. To feel that is great because sometimes in Europe you think 'hmmm, maybe in America I would be well off the pace'.

"For the guys like Febvre, Paulin or those that regularly beat me in Europe I don't think there is any question that they could go there and win races. You come to realise that we are all just guys riding motocross bikes and it was refreshing to see that everyone was so welcoming.

"I chatted with Roczen. He knows Lommel and wanted to know if the track was really that rough and was able to take my word for it. It was funny talking with him. He came up and said: "man, I really miss Europe...just being able to go down to Monaco and chill". When he went away Jason and I totally cracked up, like most of us go to Monaco to chill! He's on a different level!

"There was another funny moment at the end of race day. The KTM guys all got in a big circle and Don, the truck driver who is an

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ex-marine, made this big speech and Jason was there taking a video of it. At the end everyone's cheering, whooping and back-slapping and then Dungey shouts "I couldn't have done it without all of you guys" and turns round and throws a high-five to the person next to him...who was Jason. Jason said later that he could see in his face that Dungey was – mid-act – thinking 'who the hell are you?!' He was expecting a mechanic or someone from the team and it became Jason's claim to fame that he got a victory high-five from Ryan Dungey."

"Right from the first viewing I thought 'this is a dream track' or 'this is the dream way to prepare one'. The whole Grand Prix track 'story' is another thing but I was thinking when I was walking around Unadilla that 95% of GP tracks could be done in the same way. Even Lommel wasn't prepared properly and there shouldn't have been that top crust of dust. Youthstream should be sending people over to see how and why it is done, the methods and machinery and consulting with some of the club guys. I don't think I saw more than three or four crew working on the track; it is not like they have huge teams. We were told to take the mule for a track walk and we all piled in having a laugh."

"The vibe of a National? For me it was more like a British championship because it was very relaxed."

"We were there for press day on Thursday and there were only three rigs parked up at that time. All the other hitters got there Friday

morning, set up, did technical control between 12-1, packed up and were gone by 3. It was all done in a few hours and then on Saturday they were back by 6am, through to 6pm when they have everything broken down pretty quick and were gone. There was such a small time frame of being at the track."

"Marvin [Musquin] actually said to me that sometimes he'd go to a race and feel like he hadn't seen anyone – it is really about work and that's it. The riders roll up Friday afternoon, look at the track and go back to the hotel – the mechanics do the helmets and all the rest."

"I enjoy GPs but Saturday is a whole load of nothing. You get the vibe at the Nationals – and maybe it was just because it was the stage of the season – that it was chilled. I was in a group of Dungey, Roczen, Barcia in the gate and we were having a chat! Very rarely do you get that in GPs, everybody is just a little bit more serious."

"You can do a practice start from the actual gate and when you're on the sighting lap then the mechanics are back prepping it! It was fun to see all the cool, different things. I sensed a really nice atmosphere but I felt in the KTM team that there were two guys going for the title. De Coster said to me that if I was close to Dungey on the track then I should give him more space than anyone else – which was totally acceptable."

"Marvin was also going for the championship so there was a certainly element of 'this is

business'. At the end of the day De Coster said to me "great job" and I had the impression that he was impressed. I had come over and used a new bike, from a new team on a new track, new schedule for one day in a different time zone and managed a good result."

"He is an easy-going guy that didn't say a lot but you could tell he was taking everything in and would give me the time of day. I didn't need him to say much, to be honest, I didn't need the bullsh*t. He has been in America for a long time but I don't think he is the kind of guy who needs to say something for the sake of it and I quite like that."

"When I was in fourth I thought 'I'd be nice to get Canard and reach third!' In all honesty when I was holding fifth I was happy with that but then I saw Bogle. I'd heard of him and knew that he was just coming back from injury I thought he might tire more than Canard – although he'd only just come back as well – I could see him fading slightly. With five laps to go I said to myself "I'm going to have you Bogle Boy" coming under the bridge and then two laps later he binned it. I believe I would have passed him but I did think 'ooh, fourth – that's okay'."

"A couple of things happened in the second moto. The pace was different from the get-go. I had the wrong lines. I was using the same ones from the first race but after another 250 moto they had become a bit blown-out and wrecked."

"A lot of the guys were heading right around



“IN HINDSIGHT IT WAS SUCH A GOOD EXPERIENCE. I FELT LIKE I SHOULD HAVE FINISHED SIXTH BUT TO GET FOURTH OVERALL WAS UNEXPECTED.”



the outside – proper American style. I should have changed but I stuck to what I knew and it wasn't working. There was one section of the track that I messed up three times in the moto and it probably cost me three seconds each time.

“I also caught my ankle in a rut and it bent back a bit too much. I spent a lap and a half thinking ‘arghh, that’s a bit sore’. I could see the guys in front pulling away a bit and Weston Peick catching me. It was hard to up my pace.

“Baggett then came from nowhere and I got a bit flustered. I just enjoyed the last laps and on the final few jumps I was like “this is my last time at Unadilla!”. It was a bit like: “damn it”. It was like a Saturday at a GP and I was thinking ‘where’s tomorrow?’.

“In hindsight it was such a good experience. I felt like I should have finished sixth but to get fourth overall was unexpected. I wasn’t so keen on the quick format of qualifying. Sometimes you see that Dungey is 15th in the gate or something and you think ‘what happened there?’ but now I understand because it is hectic with no room for error.

“I went to pick up my prize money after the race. It was nice feeling to walk away and look in an envelope and see what you have made. Okay, you have bonuses in GPs and stuff but there is nothing like having notes in your hand and thinking ‘this is my job, I earned this today’.

“There has to be some scope for it again in GPs. I know Youthstream are putting on a

show and platform for us to advertise ourselves and for the teams to advertise but ultimately the guys busting a nad on the track and putting their health at risk – there has to be something for them. I’ve not been in an age where there is prize money in Grands Prix so I don’t know any different but when you speak to people in the U.S. or generally and you say there is no prize money in MXGP then they are blown away – how can you pay an entry and not have the chance to get anything back?

“In the end at Unadilla I did think I’d get a bit more! Gareth Swanepoel said to me something like “fourth overall? That should be about two and a half grand” and I was a bit disappointed when it turned out to be \$1300! I think I spent most of that on my steak in New York on Monday! I was impressed by how early everyone was moving out of the paddock, even the press room was pretty empty.”

“I got in my van yesterday to go riding and testing with WP and it was just me, my kit, some music and quiet roads and no hustle and bustle of America. It was like a whole other level down from the whole hype of motocross there and I kinda enjoyed getting back to reality. To be able to prep my own food and get back in my own routine to finish my own season strong.

“Unadilla was a trip that I will never forget but I still have a lot riding on the end of my championships: the British to tie-up and fourth in the world to shoot for. I’m looking forward to getting back into it and back to full speed. It

did feel like Unadilla was a ‘break’ and wasn’t too taxing. It was refreshing and re-motivating to get that buzz for the sport from the fans, change of scene and the whole positive welcome over there.”







Ryan Houghton heads to Budds Creek to see if the 2016 Husqvarna MXers are pack leaders or not . . .

Words by Ryan Houghton Photos by Marco Campelli and Sebas Romero



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Budds Creek, Maryland just rolls off the tongue and is the sorta place you dream about riding when you're a kid. This place has got so much motocross history. To be honest we nearly never made it cos TooFast Max was having trouble at Airport security (and the geezer looked proper guilty) then the Aer Lingus flight was a bit sketchy but it was definitely worth it. We stayed in Washington DC and the hotel was 150 metres from the White House. On the first night I was jet-lagged as hell standing on a rooftop bar with Jason Anderson and Christophe Pourcel overlooking the White House – it's one of only two public places you can do that apparently. Alright, Barack Geeeeeze?

Enough of the sight-seeing and name-dropping – let's get these Huskys fired up. Firstly I gotta say the Huskys are real beauties to look at – proper sleek – and I love the colour scheme. I'm not sure there will be a better looking model range for 2016 – Pearl Blue and Electric Yellow sounds and looks cool as you like.

Once I got my leg over the FC250 I was immediately impressed with the ergonomics. The 250 four-stroke, well, all the bikes actually, were really comfortable to be aboard. The Huskys feature completely new bodywork which as I said above is gorgeous and definitely feels great between your legs. The footpeg position was nice and the handlebars (fork offset is 22mm

standard) were set quite well for me even though I've got gangly arms. I know it sounds strange to say but I liked the bar grips. I bet a lot of you are fussy about how the grips feel in your hands and the Husky standard version will suit even the most awkward of tastes.

The first thing you notice about the FC250 once you get out on track is the weight. Husqvarna has nailed 1.1kg off the engine alone and that makes a big difference when you're doing long motos. This bike is lighter than your bird's purse when it's her round at the bar.

The weight reduction really saves you a lot of energy when you haven't got to fight a fat ass bike around for 20-odd minutes and that's a big plus for riders of all abilities. Being skinny means the MX2 machine flies off the jumps but that might also have something to do with the speed of the thing. The 250 throws out plenty of power...easily enough for Joey Junior to beat his mates in a straight line.

A small snag might be the suspension... both front and rear. I know I'm a bit like Ken de Dycker (in size at least) but the front end was far too soft for me. I was bottoming out everywhere so most experts would have to look into stiffening the forks right away. The rebound on the rear shock was too slow for the heavier rider as well. The spring would compress through all the braking bumps then on a random bump it would rebound and pitch the back wheel into the air.

Having said that, Husqvarna have worked really hard on centralising the mass and making the bike feel really stable. This meant that once the back wheel was down and you've picked ➤

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Suspension travel front/rear: 300/300mm
Front/rear brakes: Disc brake 260/220 mm
Wheel base: 1485mm
Ground clearance: 375mm
Seat height: 960mm
Fuel capacity: 7 litres
Weight: 89.1kg



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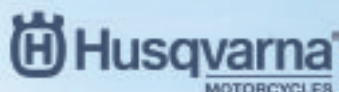
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your rut the bike handling was gorgeous again. You only had to concentrate on throttle control and the bike became a pleasure to ride through the corners.

Aside from the suspension I pretty much liked everything else about the bike. A big positive for me was the new ECU. Budds Creek has a few big uphill triples that were near the top of third gear on the 250. Instead of having to change up on the jump face the electronics just let me rev it right out. The motor keeps pulling really strong that's a winner all day long in the 250 division. Overall it's a mega machine.

Right let's get this off my chest early...I bloody love the FC350 Husqvarna! I have left

America seriously considering racing one in 2016. The machine runs at 58 brake horse power in standard form and only weighs 101kgs – that power to weight ratio is awesome. To me the benefits once again fall in the bracket of energy consumption. You just don't seem to wear yourself out on these bikes. Husqvarna claim to have produced a motorcycle that has "450 class performance with less effort while giving you 250 manoeuvrability and agility" and that statement is way better than anything I could come up with to describe the bike.

In my words it feels like a big 250 rather than a small 450. I found the FC350 the easiest to ride of the four-strokes and I was able to ride it

in the style of the 250. Basically when you ride a 250 through a rough section of track you almost shut your mind off and just hold her wide open. On a 450 you find yourself using the power smoothly and riding half-throttle trying to keep the front end down. Being able to ride the mid-engine open class bike like its smaller cousin means it takes far less effort to ride and makes you feel comfortable in being able to pin it and have the bike well within your control.

I have to mention the softness of the suspension again but with the adjuster on the top of the WP 4CS forks it was very simple to stiffen them up...although I had to click the adjuster all the way to the stop. >>

TECH SPECS!



FC250

Displacement: 249.9cc
Bore and stroke: 78 x 52.3mm
Transmission: 5 gears
Fuel system: Keihin 44mm EFI
Front suspension: WP 4CS USD forks
Rear suspension: WP monoshock with linkage
Suspension travel front/rear: 300/300mm
Front/rear brakes: Disc brake 260/220 mm
Wheel base: 1485mm
Ground clearance: 370mm
Seat height: 960mm
Fuel capacity: 7 litres
Weight: 100.1kg



TC250

Displacement: 249cc
Bore and stroke: 66.4 x 72mm
Transmission: 5 gears
Fuel system: Keihin PWK 36S AG
Front suspension: WP 4CS USD forks
Rear suspension: WP monoshock with linkage
Suspension travel front/rear: 300/300mm
Front/rear brakes: Disc brake 260/220 mm
Wheel base: 1495mm
Ground clearance: 385mm
Seat height: 992mm
Fuel capacity: 7.5 litres
Weight: 97.7kg





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Ryan reckons the 350 is the pick of the bunch



TECH SPECS!

FC350

Displacement: 349.7cc
Bore and stroke: 88 x 57.5mm
Transmission: 5 gears
Fuel system: Keihin 44mm EFI
Front suspension: WP 4CS USD forks
Rear suspension: WP monoshock with linkage
Suspension travel front/rear: 300/300mm
Front/rear brakes: Disc brake 260/220 mm
Wheel base: 1485mm
Ground clearance: 370mm
Seat height: 960mm
Fuel capacity: 7 litres
Weight: 101.7kg



I was really glad to be using a hydraulic clutch after a few years with a cable operated device. I spent my youth career with a hydraulic clutch and the Magura kit is really light on the fingertips but has a firm feel about it. It was really responsive on practice starts and I was able to feel its power far more easily than with my own bike.

The brand new launch control – a Keihin Engine Management System – is pretty damn good and for both amateurs and pros I'd say it feels really strong. It's engaged in first and second gear and lays down manageable direct power which will prove right handy for many riders who struggle with their starts. Whatever way you look at it the 350 is worth a test, especially if you've never had a bash before...it might change your style and results forever.

The 450 has had a bit of an overhaul, sharing changes across the fleet like a new redesigned, lighter swingarm to improve traction and feeling, a lighter carbon fibre sub-frame, a new

electric start with a lighter Li-ion battery and a way, way lighter engine. You won't be surprised to hear then that the big 2016 FC450 weighs less than this year's model.

It's too much to list the changes like the manufacturers do in their press kit but these alterations really have made a huge difference. The 2016 model is 5.2kilos smaller than last time out and at only 102kgs is nearly 2kgs under the 2015 250! That weight coupled with a massive 63 horses makes for a crazy fast bike. Husky have worked so hard on this bike, also redesigning the crankcases to house a newly repositioned crankshaft and clutch shaft, making the cases more compact. They have added a new exhaust system compared to 2015 where the silencer is 80mm (40mm on the 250) shorter which centralises the mass and improves handling.

I can vouch that all the changes have achieved their objective because the bike feels ridiculously light but in a good way. It doesn't

give you the feeling that it is weakened because of shedding all that weight and winding on the throttle soon reminds you that you're on a proper open classer. Boom! This 450 has crazy torque and it really is the bollocks. The thing is it's not difficult to ride either because jumping has become a real dream. If you make a mistake in the air the bike is so easy to correct and that is a real bonus in the MX1 division. Like the other four-strokes, making this bike easier to ride is a real advantage for all types of racer because you're not so likely to get tired, crash, ruin your moto or injure yourself.

Although I love the 350 for me personally I think the FC450 is a great choice for the average rider because it offers something different. It's so easy to ride off the bottom end. It doesn't matter if mess up a corner because it will pull you out of trouble no problem. The Keihin launch control is awesome and you'll be the envy of your club when you start pulling holeshots every week. Basically this bike is a >>





TECH SPECS!



FC450

Displacement: 449.9cc
Bore and stroke: 95 x 63.4mm
Transmission: 5 gears
Fuel system: Keihin 44mm EFI
Front suspension: WP 4CS USD forks
Rear suspension: WP monoshock with linkage
Suspension travel front/rear: 300/300mm
Front/rear brakes: Disc brake 260/220 mm
Wheel base: 1485mm
Ground clearance: 370mm
Seat height: 960mm
Fuel capacity: 7 litres
Weight: 102.4kg



real winner, definitely worth a test if you can because the changes are so noticeable.

The 125cc smoker has had a brand new engine fitted which is smaller, lighter and like its four-stroke stable mates has its internals redesigned and repackaged. This, along with a new power valve and new exhaust give the bike 40 horses to play with. Mega!

Of course the little 125 isn't going to have the torque and drive of the 250 four-stroke but she's still plenty quick enough for most people. A good rider could make it competitive at club level. This little baby is fun by the way. I watched the video back of myself riding and it even looked as though as I was enjoying myself, just floating the bike around. If you race for pleasure then the TC125 is a great choice of

machine for next season – I'd buy it for a laugh either way.

The 250cc two-stroke is pretty much left alone apart from a few minor detail changes like new brake discs. Clearly the men down at Husqvarna didn't feel the need to do too much work and they were probably right. It has tons of power, rideable power too, not the throw you on your arse type which might ruin your weekend.

The bottom end was especially good and for someone like me that runs high corner speed I was impressed with the bike's tracking through mid-corner ruts and berms. If you're a two-stroke runner, and the scene is big nowadays, I don't think you'd go too far wrong if you chose one of Husky's finest.

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A full-page background image of motocross rider Ryan Dungey in mid-air, wearing a blue and red Fox Flexair race suit and helmet, riding an orange and white KTM motorcycle. The background is a cloudy sky with some dirt particles visible.

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2016 ENDUROGP CLASS

MOVE?

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Words and photos by Future7Media



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A

s of the start of 2016 a new EnduroGP class will be introduced to the Enduro World Championship.

The new class will bring together the best riders from this year's Enduro1, Enduro2 and Enduro3 classes. A maximum of 16 riders will compete in this new class, including four wild card riders. Riders are free to choose the capacity of their machines.

Introducing a 'best-of-the-best' class is something series promoter Alain Blanchard has wanted to do for many years. It's also something the FIM believes is the way forward – lots of competitors, one winner, nice and simple. But is a new super class the right thing for the EWC?

It's fair to say that the announcement has been met with mixed opinion. Truth of the matter is that most, but not all, see it as the

wrong decision. It wasn't totally unexpected as the idea of a premier class was raised several years ago. Ultimately, until this time next year no one will know for sure if it's a good idea or not.

So why the change? And why now? Well, because all isn't well within the Enduro World Championship. It's a long and fairly complex set of issues but ultimately it boils down to promotion, fees, exposure, the future, vision, rules and the meeting of tradition and modernisation. Oh, and politics, as is always the case with anything governmental.

The new EnduroGP class is supposed to simplify things. Make enduro a little bit more motocross, a little more trials. The Enduro World Championship will have one major winner from the new best-of-the-best class. All other classes will remain – all six of them.

When announced no details were given about what happens a little further down the line, like

at the end of 2016 for example. Sure, we know who will go into the class next year but how many riders will stay, how many newcomers will arrive, how many riders will be kicked out of EnduroGP? And will new inductees be asked or ordered to compete?

One of the big criticisms of the Enduro World Championship is that it has lost its connection with the everyday man – the riders that used to aspire to and were welcomed to compete in the series. Efforts to make the sport more TV friendly – read push a square peg through a round hole – have sanitised the EWC in the eyes of many and made it a diluted, dumbed down version of its former self. EWC races certainly aren't easy but the 'to finish first, first you have to finish' ethos vanished a long, long time ago.

What many are afraid of is that this new class will further divide the paddock. There will be winners and there will be losers and maybe many more losers than winners. Of course >>





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RIGHT MOVE?

one rider backed by one manufacturer, one helmet company, one boot company, one gear company, one... okay, you get the picture, well, they will all be winners. They will all be happy but what about the rest?

What about TM – a relatively 'small' manufacturer who will have each/both/all of their factory riders in the EnduroGP class next year. With all respect to TM it's unlikely although not impossible that they will win. Luckily enough for them it's not all about winning but by separating their official riders into two different classes it allows them to put their eggs into two baskets. They're able to clearly promote the fact that they make different types and capacity motorcycles and generally have more to excite their sponsors with.

What about a rider like Jaume Betriu? Never heard of him? That's not a surprise as he's a Spanish privateer who's punched above his weight throughout 2015 moving closer and closer towards the Enduro 2 class podium. Jumping, or being pushed, into the EnduroGP class – a class filled with official, factory backed riders – is a big step. Is it the right thing for a rider like that?

What about Danny McCanney? Fresh into senior class competition and with only one-year of senior class experience he now has to move up again. As much as it would be great if he did, Danny's not going to win the EnduroGP title. He's shaping up bloody well to challenge for an Enduro 1 title in a few years time but an EnduroGP title in 2016?

So what do fifth, seventh or ninth place EnduroGP class results do to Danny's worth heading into 2017? Or to the worth of any other rider for that matter? For riders that will be downgraded back into E1/E2/E3 will there be any desire to keep them as salaried, factory racers?

But there will likely be winners, too, other than the guy who tops the EnduroGP class. If real value remains in the E1/E2/E3 classes – and this is the point people are worried about – and they're not seen as sub-division categories, then it might allow new talent to flourish.

For a rider like Steve Holcombe or Jamie McCanney not being a part of the EnduroGP class, yet, offers real possibility. As they both step up into senior class competition they will do so not having to go head-to-head with bigger named, more experienced competitors.

Hypothetically, if Steve goes on and wins the 2016 Enduro3 title, or Jamie the 2016 Enduro1 title, it will be huge for their careers. Some will see them as shallow victories due to the fact that the big names have been moved out of the classes into EnduroGP.

And you can't blame people for being concerned that E1/E2/E3 runs the very real risk of becoming watered down classes. After all, you'd have a hard job selling the merits of the MXGP class if Cairoli, Nagl, Desalle and Febvre were 'upgraded' out of the division. >>

Regardless of which championship a rider is chasing the on-track action is going to be thrilling





Aigar Leok and Antoine Meo have varying views on the matter



Hypothetically, what happens if a non-EnduroGP rider proves to be fastest on any given day? Unlikely, yes. Impossible, no. What's not unlikely is that someone outside the EnduroGP class might be the third or fourth fastest rider on any given day. How does that simplify things?

From a rider's perspective winning titles – or trying to win titles – is what it's all about. But only when in a class everyone else is in. Motocross has two senior classes – MXGP and MX2. Trials has one class. Enduro will now have four senior classes. Does that really simplify things?

Maybe at this point it would be good to look in detail at the Trials World Championship – a one senior class series, dominated almost exclusively by one rider, that, well, the wider motorcycling world has become less and less interested in. Surely, lesson can be learned from the struggling feet-up game.

And what about the bikes? The best enduro riders on 450cc machinery will be tough to beat. So should every rider jump on a 450 to try and best compete? Or should they stick with what they know, what they enjoy riding the best? How does all of this work from a manufacturer's marketing point of view?

Shining a brighter light on the championship's top performers ultimately makes the EWC more elitist. Maybe that's a word no one wants to use but it's exactly what the introduction of the EnduroGP class will do. And that, so it seems, is the issue most have with the new class.

The EWC was for many years a series where professionals and top and aspiring national talent competed side-by-side. Things weren't perfect back then but that was largely because of inconsistencies with special test timing. The great unwashed rubbed shoulders – and if they were good enough banged bars – with the very best. Kind of like US GNCC racing is today.

Not only will the 2016 EWC series be way too expensive for all but the very best funded privateers to compete in, if they do will they be competing in second-rate classes?

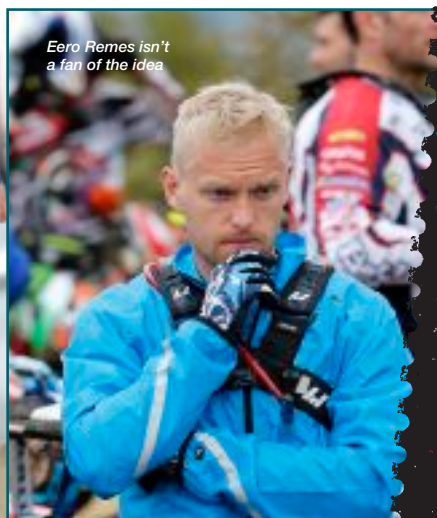




It's hoped that the move will simplify things for spectators



Eero Remes isn't a fan of the idea



OPINION BOX!

Eero Remes — TM Factory Team:

"I think an EnduroGP class isn't a good idea. I've discussed this with other riders and we're wondering why we had to go this way? It's not going to bring more spectators. Classes in the EWC were fine and we needed to make different kind of changes. As for me personally, it's early to make plans for next season. My contract ends this year so we'll see what happens."

Cristobal Guerrero — Team Yamaha Miglio:

"An Enduro GP class isn't a step forward. Getting all the fast riders in one place is going to make things less interesting for other classes. As a professional rider I want to win in a class with some of the best guys in the world. It's sad to see our sport going in this direction. Spectators are losing interest and we have to make changes in different sectors. Some people say it might be better to have six classes like we used to with 125cc two-strokes, 250 four-strokes, 250 two-strokes etc. That'd definitely bring more competitors."

Luis Correia — Beta Factory Team:

"I don't know if the EnduroGP class is a good or a bad idea. I know enduro needs some changes and at least they decided to go this direction. It's impossible to make all riders and managers happy. What makes me happy would be if they got together again at the end of next year to see if the EnduroGP class helped or not. We should focus on making things simpler for amateurs to compete in the EWC. We don't need harder races, we need more people giving the EWC a go."

Thomas Gustavsson — Bel-Ray Husqvarna Factory Racing Team Manager:

"Some of the changes proposed are good. But as an enduro rider I think the EWC should see what's done in Sweden where there's always an overall 'scratch' list and a winner of an overall class at the end of the championship. We should make it more fun for any rider to try the EWC. All these changes might make more racers head over to the European Enduro Championship. It's a series that you feel welcome to join and the races are more enjoyable from a rider's point of view. Plus it's totally free for media, which is vital."





Angel or devil? Hero or villain? Billy MacKenzie was the most controversial rider in UK motocross — right up to the point he jumped ship and jetted off Down Under. Now, over five-and-a-half years later, we catch up with the GP-winning double British champion and discover a changed man who's still as complex as ever . . .



Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Nuno Laranjeira

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Exactly who is Billy MacKenzie? Whether you've only got into motocross in the last five years or you're a life-long fan of the sport it's a legitimate question given it's one I'm not sure even Billy MacKenzie can accurately answer...

Arrogant and enigmatic and angry, chilled-out and out-spoken and controversial, hero, villain. All adjectives that apply – or have applied – to the 31-year-old Scot who has the ability to polarise opinion like no other racer, delighting and frustrating in equal measure.

Multi-time youth champion, two-time British adult champion, factory Kawasaki rider, factory Honda rider, GP winner. His career certainly isn't without its successes but, equally, Billy just might well be the biggest wasted talent of his generation. Nothing is black and white as far as Billy is concerned – with him you get the full spectrum.

The man I meet up with in an Edinburgh cafe, five years after he turned his back on GPs and the British championship to race motocross on the other side of the world, is laid back, comfortable, contented even – qualities he didn't possess when he upped sticks and moved to Australia at the end of the 2009 season.

Our initial interview date is pushed back

a week while he waits for riding kit from former team boss Steve Dixon that never materialises and then, when I finally hit the road, during the three-hour drive north he switches the venue for our rendezvous back and forth between the historic Grassmarket area of Edinburgh and his Scottish base at nearby Longniddry. No big deal, just classic spur-of-the-moment Billy behaviour.

But he's bang on time, his tall figure loping down the road towards me, unshaven in a hoody with ripped jeans and shaggy hair – I half expect to see Scooby Doo trotting alongside him. He steers us into a cool cafe he knows which "does great Mexican tuna wraps" and we find a quiet corner.

It's good to see him. I've had a seesaw relationship with Billy and when he first burst onto the adult scene in '99 I found him hard work – a cocky 15-year-old, full of himself and displaying little or no respect for his more experienced rivals. But it's easy to be too quick to judge and as I got to know him better – and, to be fair, he grew up a bit – it became clear there was much more to him than simply a fast kid with a bad attitude.

Billy's been back in the UK since January and hasn't raced for almost 12 months so it's inevitable there's been speculation on both

sides of the world that it was the end of the line for him as far as racing was concerned.

"This mustn't be about me retiring or making a comeback," he says pretty much straight off the bat. "It's almost like I'm treading water at the moment and that's what's really exciting about it. Having that feeling of complete freedom and knowing that the next path I choose could lead to something bigger and better.

"And if I decide to go racing again I'll approach it with a different attitude. It's like clearing my plate of everything I felt was sucking the energy out of me and starting again. It's like a gap year."

So why did he come back? Settled in the idyllic Byron Bay, a small coastal town 500 miles north of Sydney, Billy seemed to be enjoying a dream lifestyle...

"Basically I just missed home. I'd been in Australia for five years and obviously I stayed there because I loved it – it was good times and I don't regret it for a second but I started to think of home a little bit and I got to the point that I'd literally ticked every box apart from an Australian championship. Lifestyle wise I'd got a house, I'd travelled, I'd done everything. I'd done enough sun, sea and sand to last me a lifetime. I didn't feel like there was anything left >>



THE GARAGE GOURMET

Crisps and Mars Bars

The fact that Billy places such a big emphasis on eating well is, hardly a surprise given the dietary issues that dogged his career in Europe before he was diagnosed as being gluten intolerant.

"Because I went so hard for so long I sort of ruined everything," he explains. "I was depleting my body of all its minerals and stuff. It's pretty much the Epstein-Barr thing, it's closely related. You need to give your body a break and treat it well and find a balance but I was always so flat-out – driving up and down the UK, doing half-hour motos in the sand then eating crisps and Mars Bars from service stations.

"That was my diet pretty much every day when I was going riding because I was constantly on the move, living in the vortex. I wouldn't have had it any other way but I was just young, dumb and full of cum."



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for me to do in Australia apart from chase that Australian title.

"I started thinking about my dad and how I hadn't spent a lot of time with him – five years is a long time to be away from your family – so I just wanted to come back and catch up with everyone, help everyone who've helped me. I wanted to help my dad finish his house – he's still renovating from when I was in the schoolboys because he'd spent all his money to get me to where I was. I felt like it was my duty to give something back and it was an overwhelming feeling."

Over the last five years Billy's had highs and lows and the 2014 season was a tough one for him. He'd fallen out with his CDR Yamaha team boss Craig Dack and as well as missing home it seems as though the same reasons that drove him to Australia in the first place were driving him away.

"The last year was difficult. It was an emotional season and it sort of brought back memories of the year that I left over here. It was just taking the fun out of it. I went to Australia because I wanted to enjoy riding again and I was but, obviously, in any business people need results and I was just getting that feeling that there was that pressure again and it was affecting my riding. I was turning up at the races thinking I'd rather not be there."

His career in Oz started well and racing for Troy Carroll's Factory Australian Kawasaki team he finished second in the 2010 Nationals, 13 points behind Jay Marmont with more race and overall wins than anyone else.

"I had a deep feeling that I was the best – I went there with that attitude – and was fully thinking of winning but I broke my wrist and missed three races. I was fast enough, I was excited enough, the bike was working well, the team were working well. Because we did so well the first year it really escalated the second year – Monster became involved, Pro Circuit became involved and we just went way bigger than we should have."

"It was good fun with Troy but we kinda just got ahead of ourselves. The first year was great but when Monster and Pro Circuit came in we got that extra pressure from the sponsors. And I didn't mould with the bike – I was having real troubles for those two years because we just didn't have the base set-up we needed, we were just relying on parts coming from the States so it was a time when me and [Dean] Ferris were trying to work with what we had and it was all about the show, not the bikes."

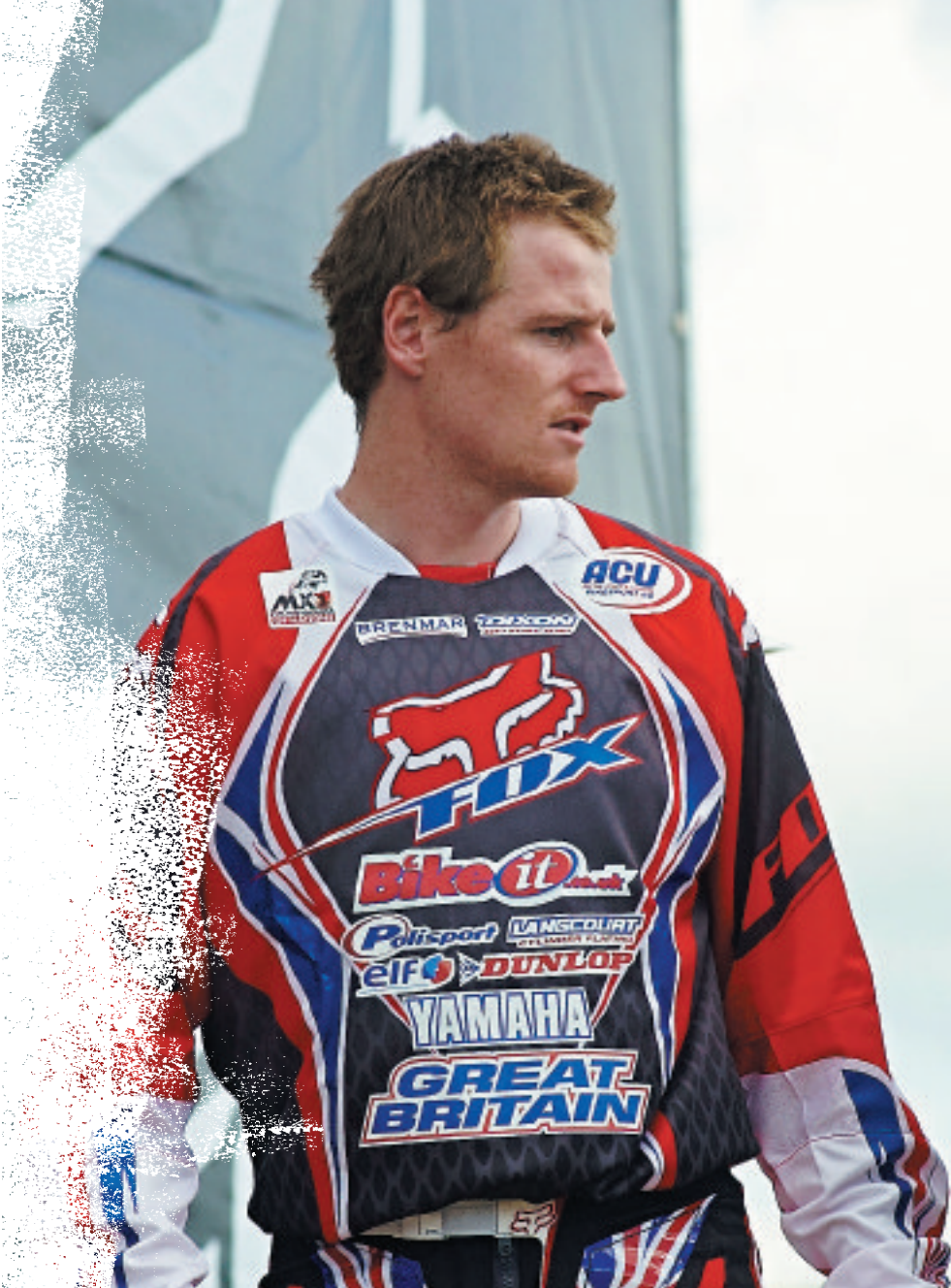
"The Monster crew were coming in, there was VIP, the speakers were going and the essence of the bikes and the racing came second. But we were leading the championship and doing well at the start and then Yamaha just upped their game and started beating us."

Billy slipped to third that year but still won seven races and a couple of overalls as he finished 46 points behind Marmont and 14 off Josh Coppins.

He was joined Down Under by Brad Anderson in 2012 but while Brad tied for third Billy ended the season in 15th after injuring his wrist and for 2013 he left Kawasaki to race for Dack's Australian Yamaha team, finishing third behind Matt Moss and Todd Waters.

"I'd had an injury-free season in 2013 and I won some races and I got fitter and I got better and I built up everything I'd lost in 2012 and so I felt like I had a good base to start 2014 with a proper winning attitude. We'd done everything we could but I just didn't feel we were ready in time – the bike, team, everything. It was only by I think the second round we got the engine sorted and then it took me ages to get to grips with it because it was that fast."

"I was trying so hard and I'd had a few >>>



FOCUS!

Diet or drugs?

Billy has been known to have the odd lapse in concentration which ultimately has cost him some good results so would, perhaps, a James Stewart-style Adderall prescription be the way forward?

"I looked into it [ADHD] and I thought about it. There were a couple of kids in Australia who had it and were taking medication and I went and saw a sports doctor. It might have helped but then it's not natural and I don't think I would have got in the zone as much if I was medicated. It would have been weird."

"I don't even think that ADHD actually exists. I reckon it's all dietary-related. If you can sort your diet out, be calm and find a balance in your life then there's nothing to medicate. When they're giving eight-year-old kids Ritalin I think the whole system is fu*ked up. I don't agree with it and I just think it's an excuse for using performance enhancing drugs."

"I think ADHD is just a massive excuse. I do believe that some people have a faster way of thinking or a more complex way of thinking but I don't think it should be dealt with by prescribing drugs."



SCOT V SCOT

Uncivil war

In the early noughties the rivalry between Billy and fellow Scot Stephen Sword was insanely intense. Swordy was older and more experienced and there was no love lost between the two.

The 2002 season was a particularly bitter one, kicking off with the UK Supercross series which came to a head – and almost blows – at London's Dockland's Arena in one of the qualifying races.

"We went off the start and got tangled and I don't know maybe if he thought I'd done it on purpose but the track was super-tight. So he was behind and he crashed with Tom Church and as I was coming round to lap him he tried to put me off the track – I just lost it and I think on the next tabletop I launched down the inside and rode into him.

"Then we sort of shouted at each other on the start straight and when we came off he came up to me as if to say 'want a fight?' but nothing happened – and then I mouthed off on TV!"

Billy won the 125cc Main Event that night but Swordy took the title and the bad feeling spilled into the outdoors where going into the final round of the British championship at Polesworth it was Billy who held an eight-point lead.

To be fair to Swordy he'd had a string of mechanical nightmares on his Motorex Husqvarna and actually switched to an Albion/KTM mid-season before beginning an epic comeback.

In the point-payers Swordy ran 1-2 to Billy's 2-1 but back then there was a mixed-capacity final Maxxis Cup race with riders scored on their position on-track, not in class as we see today in events like the Michelin MX Nationals.

Swordy rode out of his skin to finish fourth on his 125 behind the Open class machines of Gordon Crockard, Josh Coppins and Carl Nunn while Billy, starting the final lap in eighth, needed to pass Yoshi Atsuta to take the title.

With Swordy already across the line Billy came into the final corner ahead of Atsuta but he lost drive, the Japanese rider passed him back and the championship was lost. The two Scots ended the season tied on points but Swordy got the title because he had more race wins.

"It is what it is, that was my path, that was what happened. I was angry about it at the time, trying to place blame on everyone else – it was never my fault – but I made a mistake didn't I? I had it and went round the inside and there was a stone in the rut and it did ruin my traction but I was trying to protect the inside line."

Older and wiser, he almost seems embarrassed by the whole Billy versus Swordy deal.

"It was as much because of the people around us at the time. There were so many people making us hate each other and really we had no reason to hate each other, we should have really just patted each other on the back and had a handshake. It's all cool now – Swordy added me on Facebook!"



crashes – it was a new 450 Yamaha so we'd had to start development all over again from the proven 2013 bike. Towards the end of the season once I'd got the amount of time in on the bike that I felt I needed the results started to come but by that time we'd already fallen out.

"It was just a shame. Literally the weekend we fell out I went and won the overall. We had an argument in the awning after practice because I didn't make Superpole – and it wasn't through lack of trying – and I came in and we were talking about bike set-up and he just lost his rag with me.

"He was obviously stressing because he saw the championship was going out the door, I was trying my best to tell them what I thought the bike needed and he thought I was just blaming the bike."

I put it to Billy that throughout his time in the UK he frustrated people and that to me it sounded like Dack was getting the same treatment. While not exactly refuting this statement – he mentions the '08 MXoN at Donington Park (a subject we'll deal with later) – he's keen to explain his behaviour.

"I was getting to the point in Australia where I wasn't getting help from anyone, I started to become that foreign entity about to take the championship away from the Aussie contenders. I just didn't have that core group around me that was helping me get my results and I didn't really feel that I was getting the support I needed from Craig Dack.

"I don't know what the guy was thinking but from my point of view his attention switched and I was no longer of interest to him but because I was third in the championship [in 2013] and the other two guys were picked he had no choice but to take me and he pretty much said that to my face. Basically, from the first year I rode for him to the second year I rode for him he was two completely different people and it just made my work really hard.

"In a positive light the people he has working in the team and the way the team operates is second to none. It's up there with how Jan de Groot used to work. It's a business and I understand that but at that moment in time I needed some encouragement – for him to back me – and it really started affecting my



season. I was wondering why I was doing it. I wanted to go to the racing and enjoy being at the racing and it was the complete opposite.

"If I'd stayed this year there would have been an option but not with Yamaha. We didn't even talk about it. I think we both decided halfway through the season that we were going to go our separate ways."

Billy intends to remain in the UK until autumn but as far as plans go that appears to be it. There's a chance he may race the final two rounds of the Maxxis for Steve Dixon's Monster Energy DRT Kawasaki team before he leaves but, then again, he might not. There's a chance that when he goes back to Oz he might have a ride for 2016 but, then again, he might not. There's a chance he actually might retire and look for a new career but, then again...

"There are lots of options but the only thing for me right now is to go and do some training, do some riding with my mates. I'm back in with my little crew, I'm having fun. When I went out on Sunday I had a blast. The key thing for me is to not over-analyse it. To relax, be calm and run with it because that's when things seem

to happen. If I go chasing something I guess I get so intense that I almost push it away if that makes sense?

"I'm just going with the flow, I've got a month to get some bike time and if I'm feeling like I'm going all right – and I did on Sunday – and feeling the vibe then I'll come and do the Maxxis and, obviously, if I'm behind the gate I'll give it a good crack. But I'm just not going to be like 'yeah, I'm coming back and I'm going to do the last two rounds'. I want to eliminate all of that talk.

"I'm going back to Australia in November because as soon as the weather turns I'm out of here – I'm not doing a winter in the UK. Then I'll jump into my same routine and train through to February in Byron Bay, that's my home now. I've got everything around me and don't have to travel very far. I can train and ride and eat well and be a healthy human being and if an offer comes to me in that time then sweet, if not I'm going to go to college and do a graphic design course, do some more property and do something else.

"I'm literally going with the wind at the

moment, seeing what falls in front of me."

He's clearly still in demand in Australia. When Matt Moss got injured in a freak accident – he hit an earth-mover that was driven onto the track during a Superpole session – Billy was approached for a possible fill-in ride. Prior commitments meant it didn't happen but don't read too much into that because after his hiatus he's started to think like a motocross racer again.

"I've been testing the water, gently. I only got that feeling again a couple of weeks ago, like I'd got over whatever thing it was I was going through and thought it was time to get a bike again. I'm ready, I've had my little downtime and I still feel I could do another two years of professional racing. As long as I'm not putting too much pressure on myself or thinking about it too much – because I am that complicated guy."

Having won back-to-back British MX1 titles in '07 and '08 with KRT Kawasaki and then CAS Honda, Billy's '09 season – his third on a 450 – was disrupted by injury and he slipped to sixth in the domestic championship. On the world >>



BILLY ON...

Shaun Simpson

What, I ask, does Billy think of fellow Scot Shaun Simpson's current form?

"It's incredible. Anyone who wins around Lommel is world class. They didn't play Flower of Scotland though, I was disappointed, I was waiting on it. I support all the Scottish guys – there's good camaraderie – and I was really happy because he rode amazing.

"At this moment in time [if I was racing him] I would literally just try and ride my best – I wouldn't even look at him, just do my thing. Get my bike working, get a good start and ride every lap as fast as I can and if it's fast enough to beat Shaun then cool although I don't think it

would be at this moment in time as he's winning world championship races."

Ryan Villopoto

As a rider who's left one series to contest another on the other side of the world there are parallels that can be drawn between Billy and Ryan Villopoto.

"It's strange, I find synchronicity with a few of the riders like that. Pourcel for instance. I don't know how Villopoto's put up with it. He must have been asked the same question in about 50 different styles. It sounds like he's on repeat.

"You can see why he's burned out and it must be worse in America. You can see it in his eyes – he's confused with the media obligations. It's

like it's too much for him, he doesn't want to do it, he just wants to ride his bike. He's been at the top for so long and everyone wants a piece of him but Europe hasn't ruined him. Like he said in his interviews he'd decided that he was retiring win, lose or draw and the injury just made it happen quicker.

"When he came to the world championship I thought that was pretty much what I did only I went to Australia. I needed a different scene and I could totally understand what he was doing and I was all for it."

Supercross

"Aussie supercross was an exciting thing to do but I didn't have the best start because I went and raced Chad Reed's bike in America in 2010 when he was injured and broke my collarbone so I missed the first few rounds.

"As soon as I was able to ride again I was on the supercross track which was pretty dry, dusty and hardpack so I was real careful and



just built up slowly making sure I got my timing right. Then I went to the Paramatta Supercross in Sydney – Josh Hanson was there – and I almost won. I won the third race, I think there were four six-lap sprints back-to-back and I ended up tying for first with Jake Moss.

“Everything was sweet and the team were loving me and the second race I did was a mud race in Brisbane and I got second there too. It was a good experience but after that spike of magic the next two years the bike set-up wasn’t good and I just decided trying to ride supercross on a bike I wasn’t comfortable with wasn’t for me.

“When Yamaha picked me up it was for motocross only and I was like ‘sweet, yes please’.”

Big Billy

Billy MacKenzie Snr was a formidable presence in the paddock but while the father/

son relationship was at times pretty volatile it’s clear their relationship is built on mutual love and respect.

“I never got a serious grilling from my dad unless I felt that same way myself. He just wanted me to try my hardest because he was trying his hardest and we had that agreement that if I gave 100 per cent he’d give 100 per cent.

“Just living at home, that’s where there the imbalance was because he liked everything organised – because it was his house – and when I was ready to vacate the nest there was a difficult period where I was coming and going and messing his house up.

“As far as racing was concerned me and him were always bang-on and I loved him being at the races. We just couldn’t live together. He always had the right answers and he had an eagle eye for stuff, he knew how to work me and whenever he gave me a grilling I knew it was coming, I sensed it. It wasn’t like he was catching me off-guard and giving me a beating...”

stage he’d finished ninth for two years in a row and won the overall in Japan in ’07 with a 1-2 card (backing up overall wins in MX2 in Japan in ’05 and ’06) but in ’09 in GPs he dropped to 18th and although there was an offer from CAS for 2010 his heart was set on Australia.

“The world championship scene just started to die off in my head. The tracks were getting worse in my opinion, then there was all the travel involved. There were so many things. It was a massive grind, especially when you’re carrying injuries.

“I know exactly what Cairoli was going through this year. It’s almost impossible to ride with injuries. I don’t know how Cairoli did what he did. And look how many riders are injured this year. There are riders I see in the GPs who are just punishing themselves. Throwing themselves down the track every weekend, not getting paid what they should and hanging onto the fact that they were once at the front. It’s scary man. It’s almost like an illness.

“You need to weigh up the risk and rewards of the world championship and I just didn’t think it was balanced anymore. I was making a lot of money but I invested it straight away. It’s not like I was living a playboy lifestyle and getting all happy with myself. I was just living on bonus money and money I was winning on British championship weekends. So I invested wisely but that is the money you need to be making to race the world championship.

“As soon as I had injuries and that money was no longer there I was like ‘hold on, I’ve been steadily going up, up, up and now I’m going to be at the bottom again’ and that doesn’t make sense. ‘I’ve got the wins and the championships but I’ve had an injury – give me another chance’ but it’s not like that, it’s a business. I was getting a hard time from the results I was getting that year and I was sick of it. I felt I didn’t need to prove myself to anyone.

“I was already burned out with it and there was more money in Australia – plus a lifestyle that was going to be better for me, more healthy – and that’s why I made the decision.”

It wasn’t an ill-informed move. Billy had already travelled extensively in the Far East and while he was injured in 2009 he flew out to Australia for a holiday that would change his life – even down to the way he eats – as he explains over what turns out to be a really good Mexican tuna wrap.

“I’m a slow eater these days, I’ve got to chew. Once I would have ploughed that and be onto the next thing. Living in Australia has changed that, massively. And visiting Thailand and stuff. That whole journey over there. Everything I saw from when I went back-packing. I was like ‘holy sh*t, there’s another side of the planet and things are completely different.

“It’s so much brighter and more colourful in Australia, the greens, the blues – everything about it is just so intense – but I miss the seasons, you don’t get the same scents and that’s what brings memories back. These things are relevant to me, I don’t just dismiss them. I like to take everything in around me.

“Travelling to the other side of the world has made me so much more aware of things, especially food and diet. It’s so much easier to be a professional athlete in Australia and feel good about yourself instead of having to grind yourself to death into a headwind in Scotland in winter. I was running down the beach with my shirt off getting a sun tan with good music in my ears.”

At the time I remember thinking it was a no-brainer. Seriously, where would you rather be – turning motos under the Aussie sun or grinding out the laps in the slop of Little Silver in mid-March? But some people felt he’d bottled it after one disappointing season and the

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question of whether or not he could have won a world title will always remain unanswered – although Billy's pretty sure...

"Honestly? Probably not and that thought definitely vacated my mind as soon as I left. I always felt I had the speed to do it – that was obvious and I proved it many times – but there was always that thing missing and I didn't know what it was. I tried to find it.

"I won my first grand prix race at the second round in 2005 at Bellpuig. If I'd just believed then that I could be world champion I reckon that would have been my best chance but I was so happy just to win a race and we didn't think about the bigger picture.

"I won a few more races, got on the podium, won an overall – I was happy to just be winning races – but it probably would have been wise to think about the bigger picture. That's what I said to Steve about Max [Anstie] right now – this is his chance, especially with Herlings out. He just needs to believe that. He's in the best position to win that championship and I hope he does."

We've already established that's Billy's

complicated but if you're still unconvinced here's further proof...

"I feel that if I focus too much on racing I over-think it so I need to keep it on the back-burner and just do it at weekends like we used to. When I was younger and winning all my youth British championship races I never used to ride a bike during the week. I'd be on my BMX or playing football, not even thinking about racing. Then the weekend would come, we'd get to the track and I'd jump on the bike and sh*t would just happen because I was that excited about being on the bike. If I think about the weekend on a Monday I'll burn myself out by the Friday."

But surely that contradicts what he just said about 2005 and a failure to look at the bigger picture possibly costing him a shot at the world title?

"Absolutely, I realise that but that's looking back and it's always easy to do that. Thinking back to '05 we still tried our hardest every weekend and who knows, if I had started thinking about the championship maybe I would

HOME TRUTHS

Telling it like it is

"When I first went into adult racing I did the last two rounds of the GPs in Croatia and Germany. I had Craig Elwell helping me and he would always tell me the truth no matter what. I didn't know any different, I was 15, I was just doing what was in front of me, so after these two GP trips he wrote me this email with all the positives and all the negatives and it was so hard to read.

"He had Rob Hooper telling him I was a little sh*t and Dobby saying this and that – everyone who was around me and saw me and interacted with me at my first two GPs gave him feedback and he just gave it to me. I was like 'what, how can everyone think that'..."

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CHOP SHOP

Life after MX...

"I'm just doing things that interest me. I'm really just taking this time to feel what's coming to me. I had a bit of fun cutting down and customising an old CX500 Honda in Australia because where I live in Byron Bay it's perfect for it. It's my two-wheel fix but on a road bike. I've never had a road licence – I had to do a full year with L-Plates!

"I was always interested in designing stuff at school and used to custom-make my name plates for the back of my chest protectors. I'd stay in my room all day and cut out each letter individually. I just love that sh*t. I'm even thinking about doing a design course when I go back to Byron."

FIVE YEARS ON

No regrets...

So with five years Down Under under his belt has Billy got any regrets about his first half-decade in Australia?

"I had to do the hard yards with the team in the beginning and keep them happy but looking back now I should have just gone straight to Byron Bay. That's the place I fell in love with and that's the place I probably would have got the best work done.

"But because I'm just a gypsy at heart I wanted to see the whole Australia, see if there was somewhere better. I had to stay at Toowoomba for a while near the team but that was good because I got the build and the base in 2010, then I lived in my camper for a while – that was super-fun – but I can't say I have any regrets.

"I'm disappointed I didn't win a championship but I don't regret it, regret's a feeling of sorrow."

have finished further back?

It's all ifs and buts and maybes. You just don't know."

During the course of our interview Billy describes himself as a 'hippy' on a number of occasions and it seems to me – at the risk of sounding bullsh*t philosophical – he's still finding himself. Most 31-year-old men have a family, a mortgage and a steady job but Billy's single and years of hard work, big pay packets and smart investments have given him financial security so who can blame him for enjoying the luxury of introspection.

But whether he's still finding himself or not, getting away from the pressures of racing has been beneficial.

"In my mind my life's balanced. Other people might not think so but I've got a nice balance in my head. Some people think balance is having a nine-to-five job five days a week but as long as I've got a balanced diet, balanced exercise, I'm being a healthy human being I feel good about myself no matter where I am or what I'm doing. Things just fall into place.

"I don't have to try that hard at life or try and work it out as much. Just focus on being a better version of yourself and people will be

attracted to that and I've found the right friends and people in my world who believe in the same thing. That's a core belief I've gained from my travels, from my experiences."

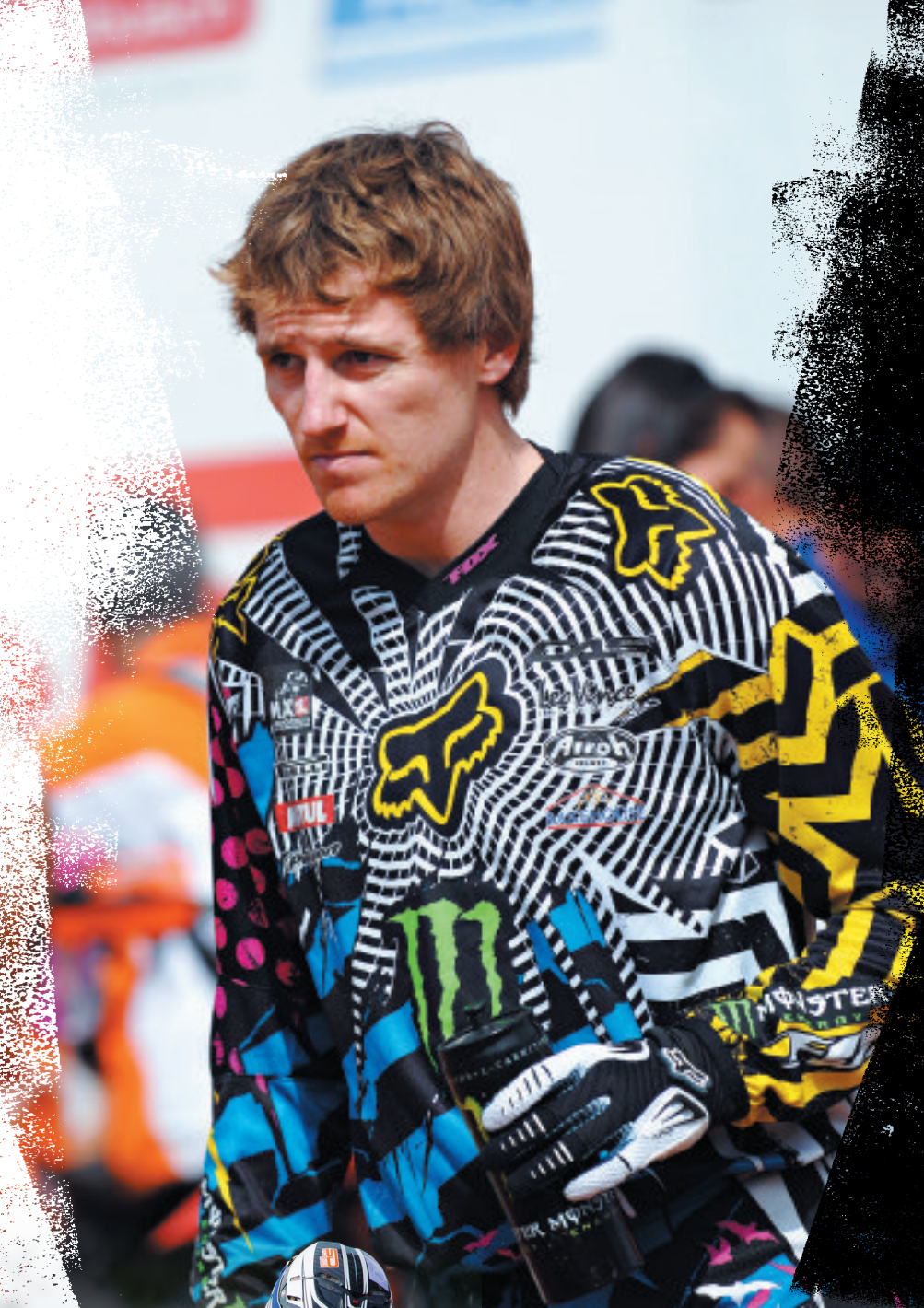
When he arrived back in the UK at the start of the year motocross was the last thing on his mind.

"I felt I needed time to gather my thoughts, deal with personal things, get grounded, be a kiddy again because in Byron I've created a life for myself that's very similar to the life I used to lead when I was a child.

"I'm in a small town, I've got my BMX, everything is easy and I have a routine. It was a conscious thing. I was searching for a place that was very similar to when I felt most comfortable which was '07, '08 when I was living at home, training with Bry [his cousin Bryan MacKenzie], riding tracks with Johnny [Douglas Hamilton], being around my friends, playing five-a-side. It's like that in Byron Bay but better because the sun's out, the sea's there.

"This [Scotland] is where I'm from and I don't mind visiting and I'll always have a place here but I call Byron home now."

Our conversation inevitably veers back towards the immediate question of will he race >>





the last two Maxxis rounds this year? If he does – and does well – it's got to be good exposure if he decides to continue his career Down Under...

"I guess it will be but I'm not looking at it like that. If I do it it will be because I want to. I would love to do well and if I do I'll try my hardest like I do at every race but I haven't raced since the last round of last year's Australian championship which was the end of September. And I've not rode a lot since."

There are a lot of fans who'd go nuts to see Billy reunited with Steve Dixon, even if just for a couple of rounds...

"I loved riding for Steve for so long because I was young and he was just trying to give me the best machines possible. He's just a freak at building bikes and he loves it. He would give



me as much as he could and I would try my hardest. I was really laying it on the line and trying my best and he could see that. It was the same relationship I had with my dad – as long as everyone gave 100 per cent we were happy win, lose or otherwise.

"I reckon I've got another couple of years left. I won the last race and the Australian championship is very much British championship level. I honestly feel that I'm still an athlete. I've mastered motocross, I've been doing it since I was six and I know how to ride a bike and I don't think I'll ever forget it. All I need to do is be fit enough on a bike I'm enjoying riding and I'm sure I've still got results in me.

"It would maybe be a regret if I didn't do another two years because I know that I'm fast

enough, fit enough, healthy enough. So don't use the 'retired' word!"

Before we wrap it up I remind Billy of his quote from a DBR interview in June 2006. 'I'm everything motocross – my friends are motocross, my work is motocross, I have to be motocross, motocross, motocross – it's how I live my life'...

So is that still true?

"It's the complete opposite."

At the start of this feature I asked the question 'who is Billy MacKenzie?' and to be honest I'm still no closer to an answer except to say I know who he isn't – he isn't the same person who five-and-a-half years went to race in Oz. And he's a better man for it...

CREEPY CRAWLIES

Git oot ma hoose!

"I've heard of more shark attacks than I have heard of snake and spider bites and you'd think it would be the opposite. I saw a lot of snakes and they're cool. There's a bit of paranoia about Australia and there doesn't have to be.

"On the East Coast you see snakes but it's just like seeing a rabbit and if you've got a python on your land it's a pet, it keeps all the vermin away. It'll never attack you, it just lies there curled up, sleeping all day.

"I haven't heard of a Black Widow bite for so long. I saw Red Backs when I was in Toowoomba but I didn't see many at all. I've seen Huntsman and they're the size of your hand – they were in my garage quite often. You'd get your gear and see one on the wall and they're big hairy motherfu*kers but they're not poisonous – but you know you need to get them out your house.

"But I wouldn't go running, I'm super-interested – I saw a massive Diamondback crossing the road, cruising along doing its thing but if you don't bother them, they don't bother you."

DONINGTON 2008

Off the box

Billy's ability to frustrate couldn't be better illustrated than by his performance at the 2008 Motocross of Nations at Donington Park.

Picture the scene, it's the closing stages of the third and final moto and Billy – having come from 16th on the opening lap – is fourth. Team GB are on for a comfortable podium finish behind the USA and France but instead of bringing it home safely Billy's still pushing and with less than four laps to go he goes down hard.

He picks it up and recovers for 11th but Team GB miss the podium by one point and keyboard warriors across the nation are ready to string him up.

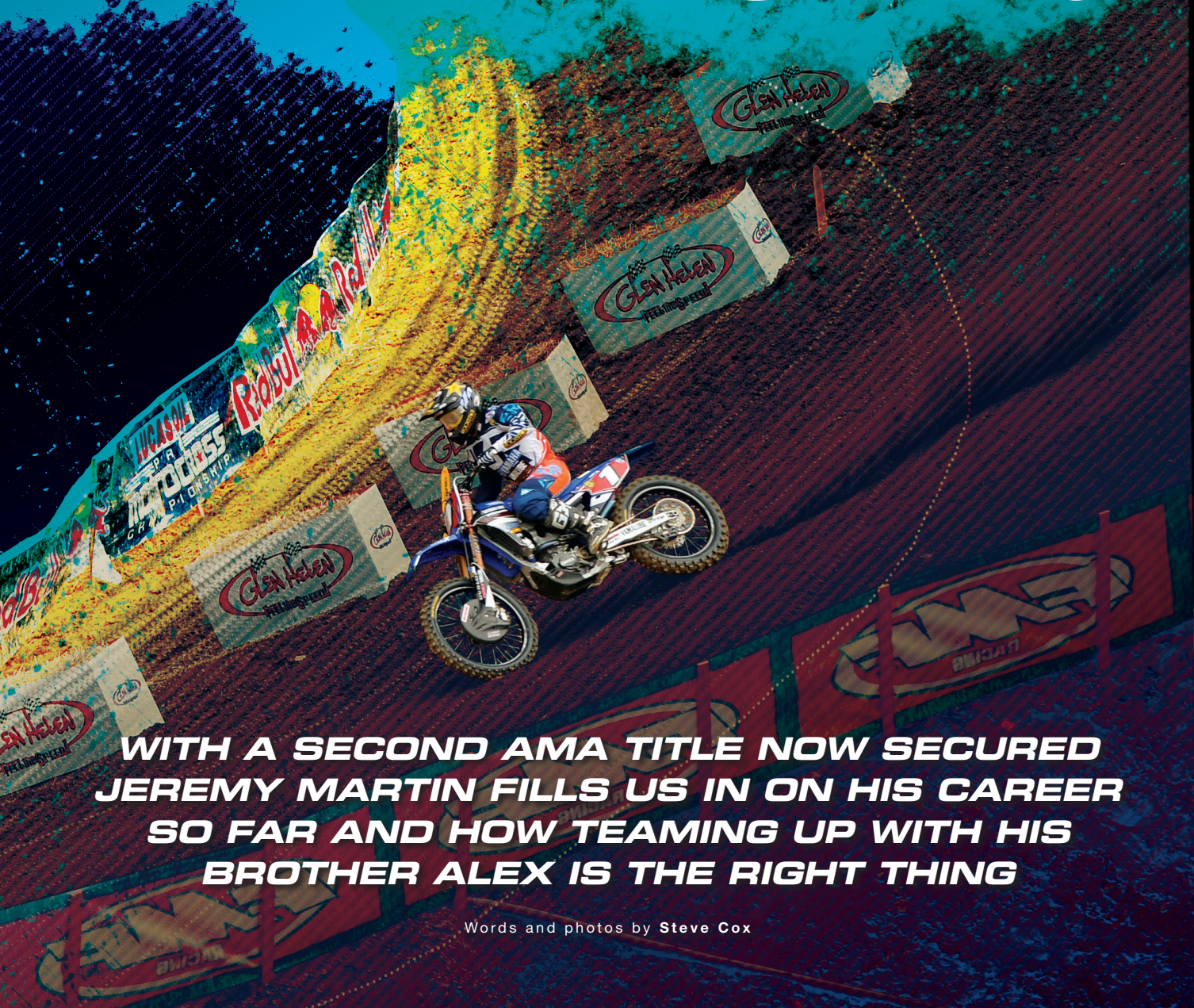
"I wasn't even thinking about it, I was just racing lap-by-lap. I was in the zone and I like it there and when I'm in the zone I just want to stay there. I wasn't even thinking about the overall.

"On the first lap I was down in 16th and I had to pass everyone – I was riding the wheels off it, loving it. I think what happened was that before I crashed De Dycker was coming back at me and as we came into that right-hander I'm sure I glimpsed him in my peripheral vision so when I went off the jump I gave it a little bit more gas because I got flustered and over-jumped, bottomed out and lost the bars.

"He caught me off guard and I stopped concentrating on what was in front of me. I honestly didn't feel all that emotional [about the backlash]. I wish I hadn't fallen off, I wish I'd have won the race but it was what it was – it just happened."



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It's pretty well known that Yamalube/Star Racing Yamaha's Jeremy Martin – the defending AMA 250cc National Motocross champion – is the younger brother of veteran AMA 250cc pro racer Alex Martin and you may even be aware that his parents own the Spring Creek motocross facility at Millville, Minnesota, which has served as a round of the AMA National Motocross Championship since 1983.

John and Greta, Jeremy and Alex's parents, bought Spring Creek in 1987 after John retired from racing himself. John wasn't just any racer, he was an AMA Hare Scrambles champion for Can-Am, so with dirt bikes in his blood and his older brother Alex leading the way through the amateur ranks, Jeremy spent his youth racing around Spring Creek Raceway.

"I was four years old when I first started riding and my first race was right in the backyard," Jeremy said. "I think it was something that was just a part of the family, like we had the track in the backyard. Alex and I, we each had our own motorcycle. My dad's friends would come over and we'd all just get together and we'd ride. We weren't setting the world on fire but we had fun. You know, it's pretty much what made you enjoy riding and start riding in the first place. You'd go to the track with your buddies, ride with each other and then you laugh on the tailgate of the pick-up truck."

Even before Jeremy made his professional racing debut in 2012, Alex kept no secrets about what to expect. While Jeremy was still racing in the amateurs Alex said that Jeremy was already faster than he was – and Alex was finishing inside the top 10 at 250cc Nationals at the time.

"I felt like I could legitimately give my brother a run for his money probably in 2011. We trained together in Minnesota. He was doing the outdoor Nationals and I was training for Loretta's and just every day we would go back and forth. We would just hammer it out. It was good competitive fire and it pushed us."

This isn't that unusual in motocross. A quick look through the history books shows that being the younger of two brothers can be a huge advantage. Tyson and Tallon Vohland, Joel and Jeremy Albrecht, Gary and DeWayne Jones, Tommy and Wil Hahn, Brian and Jeff Emig – the list is long and with the notable exception of Mike and Jeff Alessi it's nearly always advantage little brother.

That probably has a lot to do with the fact

that little brothers get to chase their faster, more experienced big brothers.

"Yeah, I think I learned a lot from Alex along the way," Jeremy says. "Before I even had taken it serious he was obviously taking it serious and trying to do the best he could do to try and get a ride and get good results. I think I just learned from Alex and watched him go through mistakes and stuff like that. And he'd give me advice. So when it came time to make the transition and everything, it was easier because he was already kind of helping me get there."

The transition from amateur to pro is quite a step for a young racer. In the amateurs there are usually three or four guys who have the pace and the races are five laps long. In the pros there are 15-20 guys within a couple seconds of one another and the races are 35 minutes long.

"Oh yeah, I think my rookie debut was a prime example of how I was unprepared. Unfortunately, I was hurt going into it so I didn't do as good as I wanted to but you definitely learn. You learn how the pros is a different level. You've got to get a good start but you've also got to realise that you're racing guys that have been in the pro ranks for three or four years that know the tracks and are mature and know how to handle situations when you're a rookie, you're like the greenhorn. You don't know how to deal with the situation the best."

And that's not the only thing, because if you're a highly-touted amateur like Jeremy Martin you also have a change of environment

>>



A lot of hard work – and a little luck – helped Jeremy Martin regain the #1 plate for 2016

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JEREMY MARTIN

Martin is yet to win an SX title although his indoor game has come on leaps and bounds



because now you're on a factory team.

"The transition from amateurs to pros is a lot different. Normally, at an amateur race or whatever you do, it's your mom and dad traveling to the race. You might have a mechanic that you hire but otherwise it's dad taking you to the line and dad telling you what you're doing wrong. And when you get a ride with a factory team your dad's not quite there any more. And you're hearing it from other people. It's just a different transition and you've got to learn to trust. And you've got to grow with the team and put your faith in them."

And even when dad is a racer in his own right there's human nature at play and human nature often makes children think they know more than their dad, no matter how much their dad has accomplished.

"You think that dad doesn't know it all and everything like that but I always listened to my

dad quite a bit growing up. Even though I may not have agreed with him, just because I knew that he meant well and he wanted the best for me. So even despite maybe saying some mean things here or there behind his back I always tried to listen to him."

With the start of the 2014 season came some incredibly high expectations for Jeremy. The new Yamaha YZ250F was widely touted as the most powerful bike in the class straight out of the crate and he was killing it at the test track. Then he showed up at round one of the 250cc East SX championship and failed to make the Main Event and things got worse when he failed to make the Main Event at round two.

"It was rough. You know, I really can't label it on one thing. I just think it was a little bit of everything. It was a little bit of being uncomfortable and being a little under prepared. We had to work hard and turn it >>



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around and we were able to do that by the end of the supercross season.”

By the end of the series Jeremy won the final Main Event and he headed into the outdoors full of confidence before proceeding to shock the US and land 10 moto victories and the 250cc title.

This year’s supercross series started out much better for him with a fourth place at the opener. With a weight off of his shoulders he took the win at round two, followed by a couple more podium finishes before the wheels came off in Indianapolis, some bad luck piled up and he failed to make the points-payer.

Still, third place at the end of the series – behind Marvin Musquin and 2014 champ Justin Bogle – was the best he had ever done in supercross.

“Supercross was a little bit rough, for sure. I mean when Dallas came around I was pretty nervous just because in the past I had a few issues there. I was able to get in the Main and get a fourth. Honestly, I was really happy with that. I was really close to a podium position.

“I probably would have had it but the red flag came out and we only had a few laps to go after that. So I was happy with a fourth. And then I ended up getting really sick after Dallas and then I went into Atlanta sick. I won there so I was pumped on that. That put me into second in the points.

“And then I never really got rid of the cold. It just kind of bugged me for the rest of the season. At Indy I struggled really bad all day there. I just never really gelled with the track,

the whoops were pretty big and they showed me who was boss that day.”

Being shorter in stature and a more natural outdoor rider, Jeremy has some work to do in the whoops but he vows to get it done before 2016.

“It’s something I’ll have figured out. Next year for supercross I’ll be a completely different rider than I was the year before, just from what I learned from this year. So I’m looking forward to big things next year in the 250 class.”

With the start of the 2015 AMA Nationals, Martin was back in the form he showed in 2014. His team-mate Cooper Webb dropped out of the first few rounds of the series with a bad ankle and that set up the outdoor series to be a showdown between himself and his 250cc East rival, the two-time world champ Marvin Musquin.



MX DES DISASTER!

How a broken foot almost derailed J-Mart’s MXoN debut...

Jeremy got his first taste of the Motocross of Nations in 2014 and it didn’t go well. He proved he’s tough – riding with a broken foot – but in the end he didn’t do much to help Team USA to victory.

“I personally would love to go to the des Nations again. I feel like I have a lot of redemption I’d like to do. I’m pretty pissed off still about what happened last year, breaking my foot and having to race. I just feel like I let Team USA down and I’d love to go there and redeem myself and hopefully bring it home with a great team.”

But he did prove his tenacity by pushing through and racing despite his injury.

“It was tough. I was hurting for sure but it was two 30-minute plus two lap motos. All I had to do was suffer for a little over an hour or live the rest of my life regretting not even trying to go out and ride. So with that mentality it’s pretty easy to suffer through the pain. It’s just not easy to go as fast as I’d like to have gone. I’d like to see how I can do against those guys if I’m healthy.”







FAMILY VALUES!

How the Martin brothers are teaming up for 2016...

One of the most striking things about Jeremy Martin is his corner speed. Especially outdoors, he carries more speed than just about anyone on the track and he does it consistently throughout both motos. He has a knack for finding smooth lines and carrying speed through them.

"Personally, one of my favourite things about riding is just the corners. I practised a lot of corners growing up. Everybody can jump but in the corners is kind of where you can make a lot of your time up. I made a lot of corner tracks growing up. There were tons of times when it was raining and Alex and I would just go on the property and we'd make a corner track and just ride because it rained so much. So I practiced a lot of corners."

Alex is turning a corner as well. At the Budds Creek National, Alex and Jeremy battled it out at the front of the pack near the end of the first moto and Jeremy stalled on the final lap, handing Alex his first-ever moto victory.

"I think obviously a lot of things are a lot different this year than they were last year for Alex. His race bike is definitely a lot better. The engine package is night-and-day better. And I think his suspension package is better. He got a little bit of a change and he decided to train with me again this year."

"I think he's learned a lot in terms of physical training, being in that grind and having every day count. I really do think it's helped him a lot being around me but it's helped me in return having him around. We're both very competitive during the week so it's like we're racing every day and that helps us both."

After spending most of his life chasing his older brother, Jeremy gets to be the guy being chased a lot of the time now.

"For the longest time Alex was faster than me and then now it has reversed. I've got the #1 plate and the outdoor championship and I'm trying to defend my title this year and he's gunning for a podium and trying to get wins here and there when he can. With him being that close now, during the week I really have to be on my A game and it helps elevate me to that next level. And I think that's why, as the season progresses, you'll only see us get better."

Yamaha's banking on this synergy continuing into 2016 – so much so that Alex has, for the first time in his career, been signed to a full-factory race team alongside his brother with Yamalube/Star Racing Yamaha team.

"Yep, we're going to be team-mates! I'm excited to have him in the same truck. And now he won't have any excuses during the week. We'll be on the same equipment so, like I said, there's no excuses..."



This was Musquin's final year in the 250cc class and his last chance to land an outdoor title but Jeremy didn't make it easy on him. The two traded moto wins at the series opener with Martin taking the overall, then Musquin managed a 1-1 at round two at Glen Helen while Martin struggled.

The two rivals went back and forth for the first few rounds of the championship chase, trading the points lead multiple times in the process.

"I knew coming into the season that it was going to be harder than last year. I mean, obviously Marvin had a really strong supercross season and Cooper is stronger this year as well. He learned from last year, as did I. It's a long series and I did a lot of work in the off-season to get ready for the outdoor championships.

"You've got to be in it for the long haul. Marvin's a little bit older, he's a very smart racer and he knows what to do. He knows to get good starts and he knows to get out there



right away. He's a two-time world champion over there. Cooper's a supercross champion. So these guys know. They're smart. They know what to do. So it's a little bit of a game sometimes. We're all fast, we're all fit. It's just who's going to be feeling better on that Saturday."

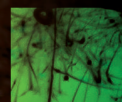
When I first spoke to Jeremy he'd capitalised on a couple of mistakes by Musquin at rounds seven and eight to pull out nearly a 20-point lead with four rounds – eight motos – left to run but the pendulum swung the other way and Musquin held a healthy lead heading into the season finale.

But just as it looked like the Frenchman would take the title, a technical problem – and resulting DNF – saw the championship lead swing back to Martin. And when the scores were added up the Yamaha rider had done enough to be crowned champion for a second year in a row.

Martin is still 'the man' as far as the 250cc class is concerned.

POWER

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Words and photos by **Max Hind**

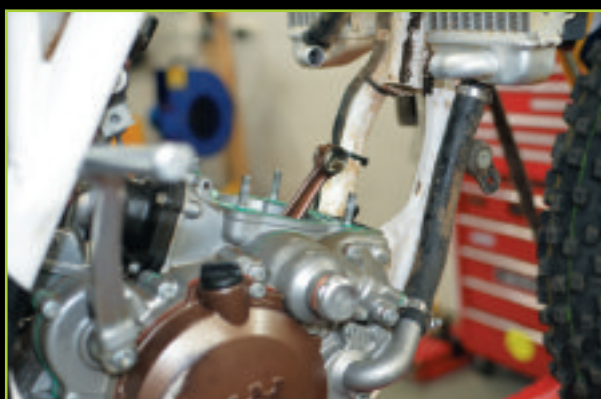
It's no big secret that I absolutely frickin' love the TC125. Out of the crate it's an awesome little machine with a fun factor reading that is off the scale! That said like any form of motorsport being successful is a combination of the right preparation for athlete and machine alike. Let's face it if you get two riders with equally matched skill levels the difference is then going to be machine they are riding or driving.

With that in mind through this year I wanted to find the best possible bolt on improvements for the DBR long term. I say bolt on because A) the Husky has to go back at the end of the year and B) I only really want to do upgrades that you can do at home in your own workshop and finally C) I wanted to try upgrades that aren't going to break the bank.

With a smoker there are some pretty standard upgrades (aftermarket pipe and reeds) that are the most common improvements. As you will have seen from previous issues, we've added both a HGS pipe and VForce3 reeds to the little Husky – one at a time so I could see what difference each made to the bike.

However there's a third improvement that our friends at Hardcore racing swear by for the Husky (or KTM) 125 and pound for pound it could be the most worthwhile upgrade to date.

**MAX'S HUSKY GETS ANOTHER UPGRADE –
THIS TIME IN THE FORM OF A FANCY NEW
VHM PISTON AND CYLINDER HEAD...**



The upgrade in question is a 12 degree VHM piston with matching VHM head and insert. Apparently this is a common upgrade at national and top level 125 racing and now that our little long-termers has hit the 15 hour mark and is due pistons and rings I felt it was time to give it a whirl.

If you look at the photo comparing the standard piston with the VHM piston you will see the VHM piston has a bevelled (12 degree) edge and without getting too technical, when installed with the matching VHM head and insert, it changes the port timing and mildly changes crankcase volume which bumps up the power by approx 2.5 BHP!

It's worth pointing out that you can't use this piston with the standard head you have to use it with the VHM unit. Although I took the bike along to Hardcore and let the spanner pro do the mod it is definitely something that you could do at home providing you have a bit of technical knowhow.

Interestingly Roland at Hardcore did talk me through the upgrade and you do have to make sure the piston height is okay and also that the squish is spot on (which may mean a thinner or thicker base gasket depending on the individual bike). Anyway Roland worked his magic and I had the opportunity to take it out for spin

around WildTracks. After a session running her in I was pretty excited to be able to give her some beans... and I wasn't disappointed.

It may just be me but the bike sounded damn sweet and particularly crisp (there is a video on the DBR YouTube channel if you want to check the sound out for yourself) and when I opened her up I wasn't let down. Throttle response was awesome and there was plenty of power on tap all the way through the power band and I could definitely feel the bike had a little more to give everywhere. The bike also seems to rev a fraction more but I'm guessing that is down to the VHM piston having one ring whereas the stock piston has two rings. Needless to say I came in with a massive smile on my face. I hereby pronounce this bike as now officially being the nuts.

The kit costs £450 including vat and that gives you the VHM head, insert and two pistons (one spare) so in the great scheme of things it's a reasonable priced upgrade that delivers great results. As a bonus the gold VHM head looks rather 'factory' on the bike too. The combination of this mod with the HGS pipe and VForce3 reeds has made a brilliant little bike extra special and next month we'll have a very special test as one of the UK's top BW85 riders is going to give her a whirl in his first 125 race...





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DISC-O FEVER!

Put your dancing shoes away as this is all about disc bolt seizure and not Saturday Night Fever...

Words and photos by Rod Bateman

Bend or remove the front brake lever and it is likely you would notice right away because we all ride with great dependency of the front brake and so consequently its good condition is paramount.

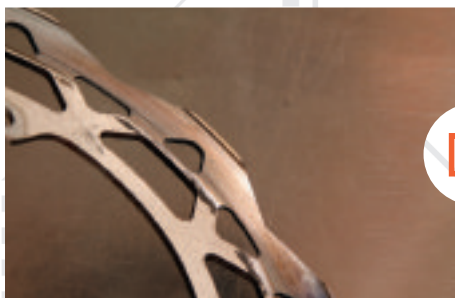
The hydraulic brake system was a humongous leap forward back in the 1980s with manufacturers all promoting the fact that their model was at the sharp end of technical advancement just because it had something we now just take for granted.

The pressure placed on the pads is immense from just a little pull on the lever which lets us forget just how hard the brake works, sandwiching the disc between composite compound pads. The result is wear and tear to both pads and the disc at an astounding rate.

After a season of racing most year old bikes will have a step ground away from the disc where the pads along with grit and

dust have worn a channel in the precision steel disc. New pads only go so far before the braking efficiency is compromised as the thinner disc heats up quicker and loses effectiveness in no time at all. Optimistically we all try the same brake check, pulling the brake and pushing the wheel forward, yet unless you can simulate 200lbs travelling at average speeds of 30mph, we all waste our time with this primitive test – all we learn is the brake has some provision to stop the bike.

The fix can be easy, or difficult, usually decided by the quality of your hand tools and how seized the fixings are. For the first time ever, we wanted a tricky one but alas it was child's play on this eight year old front wheel to change both the pads and disc, or was it that we allowed penetrating oil to soak in before we started? Who knows, but here is the simple process.



01 The typical signs of a worn disc are blatant – ridges or steps caused by the abrasive action of dirt under the pads gripping the disc as well as just general usage. Plenty of aftermarket discs are available and well worth their cost.



02 New pads are flat while used pads often wear to the profile of the disc. It is pointless fitting a new disc without new pads as the contact area would be minimal. See the profile of the item on the right as it has moulded itself to the same profile as the disc.



03 If in doubt measure the disc, most have a stamp on them saying 2.5mm, which is the minimum thickness considered to be effective. Measuring 2.01mm, this disc is ineffective as heat will build up quickly to reduce stopping power and eventually buckle the disc.



04 The most difficult part is getting the old disc off. Before you even take the wheel out, drench the disc fixings lashings of penetrating oil. They are prone to rounding and can be a nightmare. If you get stuck at this point it may be worth having a mechanic finish the next part.



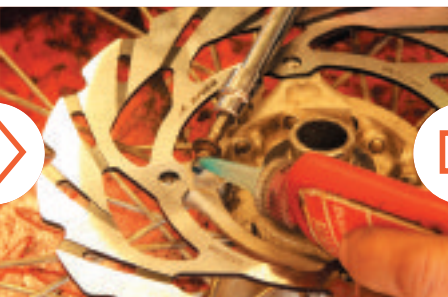
05 We were lucky and our drenching in penetrating oil helped as all four screws came out with ease. On a good point, aftermarket disc screw sets are also available.



06 It is likely your disc has never been removed and the mounting position will have a few years' worth of etched-in debris on the mounting. A good clean is essential as any raised specs of dirt will prevent the disc from running flat against the wheel.



07 The new disc should fit against the machine rebated flange mounts and take its strength from the wheel rather than depend on just the fixing screws. Clean with a rag and solvent before positioning the new disc.



08 As the disc is an occasional replacement rather than a consumable it is worth using thread lock on the fixings to make the screws more dependable.



09 The last step is to fit the new pads and the wheel. No deep explanation required here but completes the job beyond wiping any grease from the disc and making sure it works!

MUDDEERS MOST HORRID!

MUD, MUD, GLORIOUS MUD, NOTHING QUITE LIKE IT
FOR COOLING THE BLOOD – OR TURNING THE
FORMBOOK UPSIDE-DOWN...

Words and photos by **Jack Burnicle**

Some 25 years ago the 125cc world championship arrived for the first time at Hatherton Hall, near Nantwich, in Cheshire. The British Grand Prix was round six of what was proving an all-American battle for world glory featuring a contrasting trio of US characters.

A quiet, intense GP rookie from Minnesota, Donny Schmit, led the standings for Bleffe Suzuki after dominating rounds in Italy and France. Serene, charming Californian Bob Moore (KTM) had just won in Germany to move second, overtaking his brash, outspoken SoCal team-mate Mike 'Gunner' Healey, so-named because he was mates with rock band Guns n' Roses.

A top six second moto finish in Germany had boosted the standing of Silkolene Honda's Alan Morrison, moving the Ulsterman up to 17th in a series that included future world champions Andrea Bartolini, Stefan Everts, Yves Demaria, and Greg Albertyn. They all featured in the star-studded cast that arrived in Cheshire on that weekend of the mid-summer equinox in 1990, but filthy weather struck the beautiful grassy pastures of Hatherton Hall during Saturday practice, creating unkindly grim conditions for a similarly star-studded Vets' race won by the redoubtable Dave Bickers (CZ).

Race day dawned equally nasty and the first glutinous moto saw blonde Belgian-based

Schmit squirm his Suzuki to the front. But the former West Coast 125 AMA supercross champ fell four times in all before rescuing a lowly 11th place at the flag. Bright-eyed and ebullient, 21 year-old Healey took over until his KTM munched a piston, sidelining the burly Californian.

His pal Morrison, flying high on confidence and crowd support, had worked his way into second place with Demaria in tow and inherited the lead, only to lose first gear on the Honda at half-distance. With the track deeply rutted and thick with cloying, heavy mud it could have proved disastrous but Morrison adapted superbly and eventually took the chequered flag 17 seconds in front of French Suzuki pairing Demaria and Jerome Belval, with Moore fifth.

A second, Silkolene Honda in the hands of British-based South African Ryan Hunt placed seventh ahead of Bartolini and Everts. Other good English performers included ex-AMCA star Matt 'Flash' Gordon, also on a Silkolene Honda and raucously supported by the noisy masses of the 'Matt Gordon Fan Club'. The Midlander finished 14th ahead of current TAS race team boss Phillip Neill (Suzuki) and Craig Pratley (Kawasaki).

Morrison's mechanic was fellow Ulsterman Stephen Martin who, several years later, would work as an electrician for current Hitachi Revo KTM team owner Roger Magee! Between races, Stephen had a job on his hands. While an

impassive Morrison sat calmly in their awning Martin mated his specially ported moto-winning cylinder to a new Honda bottom half with a working gearbox!

The track had by then dried for a stickier but still treacherous race, two. Alan slotted into fifth place behind Schmit, 20 year-old Ryan Hunt, Healey and Moore but Healey, nailing his Katoom's brand new motor, barged through to second and closed in on the leader.

Donny responded and their intense duel dragged them clear of Moore and Hunt. Little Italian Bartolini skipped past the tall, stylish Morrison but the imperturbable Ulsterman knew that sixth place would suffice for the overall verdict and coolly kept Dutchman Edwin Evertsen (Kawasaki) and Suzuki duo Everts and Pit Beirer at bay to claim an historic and loudly applauded victory – the first Irishman to win a motocross grand prix, 33 years after the inception of the world championship and riding bike number 33! >>



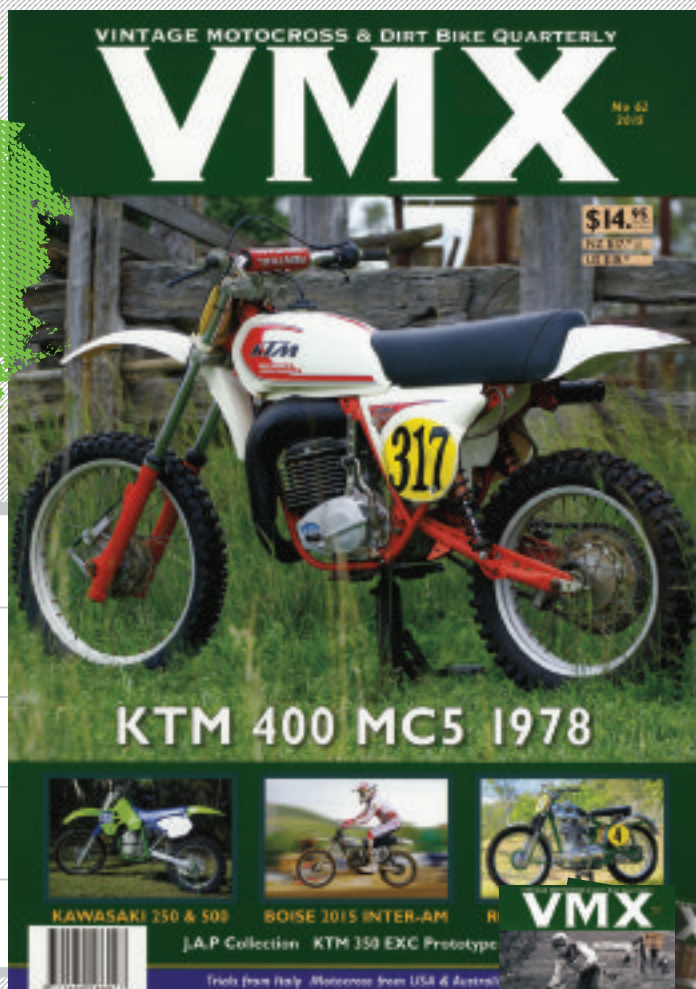


The late, great Dave Bickers (CZ) wins the Vets' invitation race at Nantwich's 1990 British 125GP!

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First Irishman Alan Morrison (Silkolene Honda) winning the 1990 British 125GP



Sandro Puzar (Chesterfield Suzuki) romps to double victory in the 1990 French 250GP at Gimont despite smashed roll-offs

Gimont and that balmy evening we attended a reception at the stunning Chateau de Larroque, laid on by the organising Gimnot Moto-Club. Speakers included the local Mayor, club president Monsieur Causse and our very own ACU chairman Albert Carter, president of the jury, who baffled the polite gathering by complimenting them on "their bootiful circuit!"

Five years earlier Gimont's only previous 250 grand prix had been lashed by hideous rainstorms. Surely lightning couldn't strike twice? But it did – literally. Poor Monsieur Causse sucked anxiously on his Gauloise on Sunday morning as swollen grey clouds exploded into thunderous downpours. They

stopped just before the first moto but the damage was done, the steep, majestic hillsides reduced to a glutinous quagmire so severe that the race was red-flagged after several early pile-ups.

Undeterred, champion elect Alessandro Puzar (Chesterfield Suzuki) stormed to victory in the rerun, initially challenged by Jamie Dobb (Honda) until the Derbyshire teenager got filled in by the Suzuki's muddy roost and discarded his goggles. Slipping back behind German Roland Diepold (Kawasaki), Jamie sacrificed third by shrewdly stopping for fresh Oakleys and rejoined to finish fourth behind former 125 world champ Pekka Vehkonen (Yamaha).

As at Nantwich race two was a drier, stickier affair that Dobb holeshot from Diepold and Vehkonen before being caught by fellow-Brit Rob Herring on a Heron Suzuki. The pair fought for several pulsating laps as Puzar relentlessly closed in until Robbie fell, impeding Puzar and Jamie once more led!

Alex attacked again to take a decisive double win as Dobb succumbed to another Suzuki-mounted Italian, Michele Fanton but held off Herring in a nail-biting climax to secure second

place overall and a career first grand prix rostrum! A second Heron Suzuki, piloted by Oxford's stylish Mark Bennett, lost a race-long battle with Vehkonen but beat former champion John van den Berek (Chesterfield Suzuki) to make it three Brits in the top six!

Yannig Kervella's Honda ended the day sixth overall to reward those hardy French fans who had braved the storms but the day belonged to Michele Rinaldi's hard-charging protégé Sandro Puzar. 'Crazy Horse' had now scorched to eleven out of 13 moto wins and would go on to clinch the world crown three rounds later at Unadilla. This was Rinaldi's first world title as a team manager, expertly handling the volatile Italian gypsy. Two years later he changed to Yamaha and now, 25 years on, might well be on his way to a further world championship success with another astute signing, Romain Febvre. That damp day at Gimont also saw 18 year-old James Dobb stamp his name on the grand prix scene, although it would be eleven years, an American odyssey and several false dawns before 'Dobber' landed the ultimate prize!



Having coolly collected fresh Oakleys, Jamie Dobb (Honda) claims his first ever grand prix podium in a muddy 1990 French 250GP

Typically, the retiring Ulsterman allowed himself just a smile of satisfaction amid the celebrations to his Irish team and supporters, headed by his dad Harry and Tony Steele. "That second race was much harder," admitted Alan. "There was more grip and it got very rough. When my pit told me sixth place would do I just concentrated on holding it!"

He then joined Donny Schmit and Bob Moore on the rostrum to enjoy a truly champagne moment, while Ryan Hunt's fourth overall capped a brilliant day for Silkolene Honda.

The next round at Killinchy, in his native Northern Ireland, saw Morrison finish third overall behind title rivals Moore and Schmit, hoisting himself to a career best 10th in the 125 world championship – behind six future champions!

A week before Alan Morrison's ground breaking victory, I'd flown to Toulouse for the French 250GP and was met at the airport by that charming Gallic photojournalist, the late Patrick Boulland. We ate out that night with his stocky compatriot Yannig Kervella, a veteran of seven years on the 250GP circuits.

Saturday in the south of France dawned warm and sunny over the fabulous setting of

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Words by Nev Bradshaw

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The 2016 KX450F is a highly refined beast



It's funny how a brand's fortunes can change almost overnight. After dominating the 450 AMA Supercross series since 2011, and racking up a heap of MX1 GP wins during the same period, the disappearance of Kawasaki's KX450F from the top of the podium in 2015 is nothing short of shocking.

Okay, there was RV2's impressive win in Thailand and Tanel Leok has been giving 100 per cent to put the lime green machine at the front of the pack in the UK but other than that it's been a quiet year for the bonus-cheque writing department at Kawasaki HQ.

It's fair to say that the fallout from the RV gamble is mostly responsible for that result swing – it could have paid off massively for the green team but didn't. Fortunately, the guys and girls in the development department aren't big risk takers like the marketing boys apparently are and have worked tirelessly to offer solid improvements to the 2016 model that will almost certainly pay dividends out on the track.

More power, less weight and personal fit are three areas that the Kawasaki boffins have really concentrated on and they've delivered with an even more powerful engine, lighter frame and adjustable ergonomics that come as standard on next year's model. Those goals have been met by the use of a revised cylinder head with updated intake valves and

valve timing, a slimmer and lighter frame and adjustable triple clamps that offer four separate handlebar clamp positions – if you can't find yourself a comfortable set-up on the '16 KX-Fs then you probably won't on any bike.

Moving back to the motor for a moment, the Kawasaki engineers have offset the cylinder, improved air flow inside the engine by opening airways and changing the port shape and even changed the inlet valve heads to increase performance. Weight has been saved by trimming unnecessary material on gears and shafts.

A new seat and fuel tank makes for a flatter feel while a six millimetre slimmer frame makes it easier for riders to move about – even the radiators have been turned inwards to increase manoeuvrability.

The suspension units are Showa with SFF-Air TACs up front and an all-new Uni-Trak linkage and Showa shock taking care of business in the rear.

Other model highlights include an oversized (270mm) front disc brake, launch control mode for better starts and 'new factory styling' aka BNGs.

While we could go on about the tweaks and tickles indefinitely, the proof of any pudding is in the eating so without further ado let's hand you over to this test's tester – Nev Bradshaw...

I've watched a couple of GPs at Maggiora

and always thought it looked like a pretty cool track to ride. When we arrived I was super impressed and it was groomed to perfection. As well as all those elevation changes there are a bunch of pretty decent sized jumps – some big doubles and tabletops and a couple of bum-twitching triples. There are also awesome facilities at the track including a swimming pool that's situated right next to one of the big drop-offs.

Add in some mid-30 temperatures with plenty of sunshine and we were in for a good day of testing the new Kawasaki KX450F.

My initial impression of the bike was that it felt very balanced and gave a good planted feel on the ground but at the same time was very light and easy to move around. I felt like I could put the bike exactly where I wanted and move about the track with ease. Over the jumps the bike performed well – it's nice and light to scrub and very stable on the big hucks.

I found that the brakes were great. The front brake was progressive but strong and offered a nice feel while the rear brake worked well in all situations too.

There are four different handlebar position options to choose from. I like low bars, so ran the very back option with the bars swept back pretty far – that set-up worked best for me. I felt like I could turn the bike well and put some weight through the front of the machine. >>



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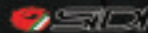
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Photo: Adam Campbell / ACP

Although more an MX2 man
Nev soon felt at home on
the 450 Kwacker



Another cool feature is that you can swap between two different footpeg heights so you can tailor the chassis that bit more.

Suspension wise I found the overall feel a little bit soft. The bike was set for a 70kg rider and I've hit 80 since I stopped racing full-time. It still soaked up the small braking bumps really well and the rear tracked the ground perfectly on acceleration bumps but on the big hits I felt it blew through the stroke pretty hard and going downhill it felt like it was soft and working in the wrong part of the stroke.

I went eight clicks stiffer on compression at the front and that seemed to hold the forks in the good part of the stroke a lot longer which felt a lot better. The rear I went eight clicks harder on high speed compression and one full turn in on low-speed. It did give the rear a more positive feel but I think a stiffer spring would've been the ticket for me.

I think the triple chamber air fork is a great design as long as you can understand how it works and get your head around setting it up. Showa are in the process of bringing out an App to help you with that though which is very impressive. Keep a look out for that on the App Store.

Engine wise the bike was very strong yet smooth. The bike never felt like it wanted to get away from me and the traction to the ground was great – it definitely generates plenty of forward momentum.

For a 450 I was very surprised by the

over-rev. The bike has a very wide power band and revs on pretty far making it very rider friendly. The engine delivers good torque and even when cornering in third gear it gets into the sweet spot of the power band very quickly.

You get three different plug-in ignition maps. I found the white one to be the best as the power came in a lot earlier and I found it took the next gear a lot quicker as well. A lot of the big uphill triples seemed a bit easier with the white plug fitted.

Together with the light chassis, the bike has a very light engine feel on the track – there isn't a heap of engine braking and the power picks up really quick giving the engine and chassis a very light, easy to ride, feel.

The clutch worked well and didn't fade at all through any of my sessions.

Overall I'd say the 2016 KX450F is a fast yet very rider friendly bike and with a bit of suspension work to suit the individual would make a great race machine for pretty much all racers.

TECH SPECS!

KX450F

- Displacement:** 449cc
- Bore and stroke:** 96 x 62.1 mm
- Transmission:** 5 gears
- Fuel system:** Keihin 43mm EFI
- Front suspension:** Showa 49mm SFF-AirTAC
- Rear suspension:** Showa rear shock with Uni-Trak system
- Suspension travel front/rear:** 310/315mm
- Front/rear brakes:** Disc brake 270/240 mm
- Wheel base:** 1495mm
- Ground clearance:** 345mm
- Seat height:** 960mm
- Fuel capacity:** 6.3 litres
- Kerb Weight:** 108.7kg

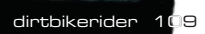



A dirt bike rider is shown in mid-air, performing a stunt against a heavily textured, grey wall. The rider is wearing a black and orange jumpsuit and a helmet. The bike is tilted, and the rider's arms are outstretched. The overall scene is dynamic and action-oriented.

Makin' movies!

We go behind the scenes with Max Anstie, EBB and the boys as they get wild in front of the camera . . .

Photos by Haggis Hartman





Clarkey and EBB get
close for the cameras

When we caught wind of the fact that videographer Ty Kellett was shooting an Apico promo movie at Max Anstie's place where Elliott Banks-Browne, Steven Clarke, Jamie Law, Matt Burrows and of course, Max himself, would all be laying down some hot laps we knew we had send one of our ace snappers

down there to capture some of the action.

Max's practice track has a fearsome reputation as being super-technical with huge jumps that'd scare the bejesus out of the average guy. Fortunately the riders assembled for the shoot are far from average and when Ty yelled 'action' that's exactly what he got – action of the raddest kind...



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Something important is missing from this picture
- can you tell what it is yet?

Elliott Banks-Browne
has style for miles

Max Anstie's complexion is helped
by scrubs morning, noon and night





Admit it - big whips excite you too!

It's nice to see Mel Pocock
back on two wheels



Jamie Law kicks up the dust
at the Anstie compound





Scuba Steve gets sideways

Knowing what to do with their hands during a photo session is a problem that has flustered riders since the beginning of time



Clarkey and Matt Burrows found it hilarious that EBB was having a bad hair day...



Jamie eyes up the Hampshire countryside knowing it's not a patch on Cumbria, eh marra!


THE GOOD THE BAD & THE UGLY






AND JUGLY


ADAM WHEELER EVALUATES
THE 2016 MXGP SERIES SO FAR...



Max Anstie has rocketed up the MX2 series standings and is currently third with three rounds remaining



Romain Febvre is top dog in the MXGP class



the factory MotoGP headquarters in Italy in February. What nobody knew outside of his inner circle of four or five people in the Italian squad was that Febvre's resilience and mental 'toughness' was double that of his team-mate.

At the time of writing Febvre has topped every chart and statistic for MXGP this year aside from Pole Positions – and just two more Saturday Qualification Heat victories can still pull this off. What is remarkable is how he has taken the adoration and increase of pressure and demands on his time in his stride. From his first Grand Prix victory in MXGP – on home soil no less – to Yamaha's 2016 launch to dealing with the expectation that his sand skills were not on a par to his rivals (they were, with third place at Lommel and his ninth podium on the bounce), countless interviews per round and a first Motocross of Nations selection, Febvre has dealt with the climb of status in sync with his results in steadfast fashion.

Okay, he is still green and maybe does not have the same desperation as an athlete like Max Nagl who knows he has been at the top of the game for almost a decade and chances to head the world can be few and far between (it could be argued that Nagl was feeling the weight of the red plate at round eight for the Grand Prix of Italy, two weeks before breaking his ankle, via his forceful argument and altercation with Evgeny Bobryshev in the paddock after the race).

Cynics will point the finger at Febvre's position due to the absence of Desalle, Cairoli, Villopoto and an off-song Gautier Paulin but with all of those cases – except maybe for

THE GOOD

ROMAIN FEBVRE

MXGP has barrelled through six months and three continents to arrive to a point where silly season has wrapped, titles are being buffed for presentation and riders can finally consider a trip to the travel agent in a non-working capacity. We decided to pick three elements of Grand Prix that have both impressed and frustrated us so far (while hoping not to lay a jinx) as the 'back cover' of the book for 2015 teeters on closure...

The contender that never was. A broken humerus bone and hernia in the winter ahead of his first season on the YZ450F (a size of motorcycle that Febvre admitted to us in the summer of 2014 that he was unsure about and was actively searching for a saddle in the USA to remain on a 250) hardly laid the grounding for what would be a monumental term in the career and life of the 23 year old Frenchman. He was the strict unofficial understudy to 2014 runner-up Jeremy Van Horebeek at the time of Yamaha Motor Europe's lavish team presentation at



Nagli's misfortune in being clipped by David Philippaerts at Teutschenthal – their own mistakes and misjudgements have kept them away from a game in which Febvre has stayed fast and seized opportunity.

We're also talking about competition across some of the trickiest and sketchiest tracks seen for a good few years in MXGP – Febvre has persevered and improved. He and the Rinaldi crew have hardly sat around safe in the confines of their burgeoning confidence and momentum. Key tests before round eleven at the Grand Prix of Sweden helped enhance the performance of the YZ450FM away from the gate and at Uddevalla Febvre swept both motos on Sunday for the first time.

Febvre could guarantee his place in the history books before MXGP leaves European shores. He could also fall foul of fortune and end up as another chapter point in the 2015 story of MXGP. He has certainly made an impact however and maybe now the real interest is not whether he can become France's first champion in the premier class since Mickael Pichon in 2002 (250cc) but what he can do in 2016 in the same Yamaha team.

It is a great narrative – the rookie, the name-from-nowhere and the entirely watchable manner that Febvre has attacked and ridden the YZ like it was his old FC250 Husqvarna from 2014. If he seals the deal then it will break the orange hold on MXGP that has been in place with KTM and Cairoli since 2010 and might be the reenergiser that the Sicilian needs to set a promising stage for next year.

THE BAD

TRACK PREP

Youthstream Track Director Greg Atkins – filling the job that few appreciate, many condemn and hardly anybody wants – essentially left his role after overseeing the Grand Prix of Argentina, round three, at Neuquen which, thanks to the volcanic sandy terrain, provided MXGP with a vibrant and challenging new course and still the best of the year so far.

Since then the championship venues have attracted derision and criticism more often than compliment. Grand Prix tracks have always tended to vary in quality simply due to the fluctuating levels of control and preparation that Youthstream can enact while partnered with respective clubs – this was often why Atkins' task was frequently thankless.

Some circuits were simply too old, some had uncooperative crews and others did not have the means or the resources to carry out the work necessary to cope with Grand Prix and the vast European Championship support bill that can sometimes see up to six categories racing across terrain in a weekend and involve skills of juniors, 15 year old near novices (EMX150), to near-amateurs (EMX300) to world champions in MXGP. Each Grand Prix is now a melting pot of increased demand on facilities, infrastructure and also the surface itself – EMX250 reaches nine rounds in 2015, which means it is almost present at every European fixture.

The nadir this season was reached with Germany (Teutschenthal) and Sweden (Uddevalla) in a two-week spell at the end of June and the beginning of July. Both hard-pack with little evidence of pre-event prep and a haphazard and inexplicable approach to watering, that caught out Jeffrey Herlings in particular and led to a broken collarbone and little finger at each event.

In the MXGP press conference after Uddevalla, Romain Febvre, Jeremy van Horebeek and Kevin Strijbos were damning. "It should all have started on Thursday," Van Horebeek said. "Preparation should mean ripping and watering. I know it will be difficult in the first practice session but the mud will create more lines. Watering the hard parts is dangerous. It is like riding on ice. In the second moto there were puddles there! It is wrong and I hope they understand us and can make it better."

"They should not be watering when it is hard and slick because it becomes very dangerous," said Febvre while Strijbos added – "The second moto was just...horrible. The first few laps were really sketchy and we had to take many risks. They need to change something...I don't know. If the track is watered then it should also be ripped. Just putting water on hard-pack does not make sense."

Youthstream also reacted. By the Grand Prix of Latvia one week after Sweden both Teutschenthal and Uddevalla had been slapped with a TBC tag on their dates for 2016 with the condition that they overhaul the approach to their tracks. The promoters cited arrogance >>

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and naivety as the reasons behind the lack of response and priority by the respective organisers. They had also installed a track maintenance crew to fill the Atkins hole by this point but it is a band-aid on a large wound until the central issue of giving a dedicated team with total autonomy with powers to shape the MXGP venues as they see fit. And this is extremely hard to do considering the range of territories, cultures and philosophies that cover the 13-odd countries that form the calendar.

The focus on tracks has led to renewed spotlight on the exceeding performance of 450cc machinery and what can be done to make motocross safer but almost all runners in the MXGP class feel that instead of restricting machinery the first area of concentration should be the 'stages' themselves.

'Approved' tracks like Matterley Basin and Lommel have not come around fast enough in the schedule to quell the general feeling that MXGP has somehow taken a backward step in the last year or two (perhaps the quantity of racing is to blame?).

The surge of concern had begun as early as round two in Thailand with a scratchy, jumpy and compact new build over a crumbling road race asphalt at Nakhonchaisri with Davide Guarneri voicing his opinion that riders need to campaign for better and safer conditions (to their detriment nothing has been organised or proposed yet from the racers' fraternity). Youthstream were also non-plussed about what they found in the basin of heat west of Bangkok and it highlighted the practical difficulty of ensuring optimum track states across the spectrum of a global contest.

For years it has been common and accepted wisdom that AMA tracks are far superior. They may lack the diversity of Grand Prix (same loamy texture is often found it would seem) but each individual organisation knows what it takes to create an attackable surface and almost want to outdo each other. Shaun Simpson discovered this on his recent trip to Unadilla.

"I really think the MXGP series can learn from the AMA series with regards to the track prep," the Scot said. "I fully understand that this will not apply to every single track but on the whole I think it would work on 90 per cent of the places we ride in Europe. In the U.S. they rip the track 30-40cm deep, then water it, they then re-rip it and water it again. Repeating this

process eight to 10 times! It makes sure that there is a 30-40cm layer of perfectly prepared soil. The bikes can rip right down through, never hitting a hard edge, hard base, hard pack, blue grove line or a spot of dust for the whole weekend of racing.

process eight to 10 times! It makes sure that there is a 30-40cm layer of perfectly prepared soil. The bikes can rip right down through, never hitting a hard edge, hard base, hard pack, blue grove line or a spot of dust for the whole weekend of racing.

"What more does a motocross rider want than deep lines, bumps, choices to make every lap, places to pass and a technical circuit that will challenge you mentally and physically?" he adds. "If you can beat your rivals on tracks like this then that's what motocross is all about. Who wants the start and first corner to almost dictate the result with a full 35 minutes of 'follow the leader'?"

Okay, weather is a factor and you'd have to account for a percentage of an 18-19 GP calendar to be wet but as Simpson says, maybe a close analysis or re-evaluation of the American system to see what elements can be brought to MXGP would be a wise move. For 2016 at least then Youthstream will have to consider means and further investment to ensure that the complaints die-down and Grand Prix tracks become a place where professionals and not only European hopefuls 'want' to compete.

THE GOOD

OLD BOYS

Eight podium finishes at the time of writing between the likes of Red Bull IceOne Husqvarna's Max Nagl, Rockstar Energy Suzuki World MXGP's Kevin Strijbos and Team HRC's Evgeny Bobryshev proves that there is life and potential for the older generation in the premier class. While Romain Febvre might be an anomaly at 23 years of age and Nagl showed he still had prowess in Brazil and Mexico last year and Strijbos also won a moto at the 2014 Motocross of Nations, Bobryshev's renaissance in particular after an injury nightmare only adds flavour and strength to a category that constantly has its limited entry list battered.

MXGP tends to see big money investments into athletes with winning potential, see Paulin's transfer to HRC and Clement Desalle to Monster Kawasaki as brands and sponsors chase the number one plate (that hardly anybody seems to like these days so respect to Jordi Tixier) but there is a supposed second tier of rider that can still bring a lot of value to all those companies investing money into racing.

You can only hope that somebody in the set-up somewhere at Hitachi Construction Machinery Revo KTM was accumulating all the material and coverage from Shaun Simpson's victory at Lommel to present to current >>



Evgeny Bobryshev has come on strong in the latter half of the series



Ryan Villopoto came, saw and broke his coccyx

sponsors and potential new ones to increase the pot for 2016.

For the comebacks and enduring worth of names like the three mentioned, Simpson, Ferris, Waters and even David Philippaerts as a top 10 runner from the framework of his own team, there were some grim tales.

Former world championship runner-ups Ken De Dycker and Rui Goncalves have to be looking at the very end of their careers at the highest level. De Dycker is actually one of the oldest in MXGP at 31 and effectively terminated two unhappy terms at KTM with shoulder surgery. Goncalves was scrabbling around for a bike upon which to finish the season with his Ricci Husqvarna crew in financial straits. Tyla Rattray had already decided before the end of the first half of the campaign that his troublesome hip and back would be the final straws to draw a 13 year Pro stint to a halt at Glen Helen.

One of the most disappointing stories of 2015 revolved around Tommy Searle who could not even buy a piece of luck after what had been the ideal pre-season period preparing in Italy and vastly impressing the factory Red Bull KTM squad. One top 10 finish and at least four injuries continued the 25 year old's unhappy streak since he blitzed the GP scene in 2012 and was then obliged to enter MXGP. Similar to Bobryshev he needs to find a way back again with Kawasaki in 2016. Hardly an 'old boy' but it would heartening to be able to write about Searle in one of these 'Thumbs-up' points twelve months from now

THE BAD

RYAN VILLOPOTO AND AMERICAN PRESENCE

Enough keys have been bashed about Villopoto, MXGP, his disappearance, retirement and legacy but it is still staggering to think how 2015 has transpired after the feverish build-

up pre-season that had many proclaiming the campaign as the most eagerly awaited in recent memory. Villopoto could not have been more in-demand and the fuss surrounding his arrival and match-up with Tony Cairoli drove the defending champion to the point of declining interviews requests (previously unheard of for 222) and eventually deciding to ditch the 350SX-F that had delivered five titles.

9-8-1-3-4-4-4-DNF is the sum total of Ryan's Grand Prix career through three and a half meetings and just one round on European soil. It would appear that a great many people – fans, sponsors, press – cared more about his immediate legacy than the recently turned 27 year old himself (he actually called time on a dominant multi-million dollar career at 26).

The 'Villopoto Effect' has been tangible this season with a noticeable upturn in spectator attendances, particularly in the early stages of the year and up to rounds six/seven when it was evident that all was not dandy in the Monster Energy Kawasaki camp. It would not be overly boastful to state that MXGP has benefitted from increased American interest (still the largest motorcycle market in the world apparently) and two USA Grands Prix and the 2017 Nations have re-entered the calendar.

It remains to be seen what AMA riders think of MXGP as a career choice. Villopoto admitted on Youthstream's TV Studio Show prior to a PR appearance at the recent Belgian Grand Prix that he could have done a pre-season international race to be better prepared.

Other riders have commented that the former champion made a misjudgement by not moving to Europe earlier for acclimatisation to tracks and conditions. In this sense he is a cautionary tale.

MX2 rider Thomas Covington is still getting to grips with the demands of GP circuits on this continent, and the 18 year old is into his second year in Grand Prix. Factory teams could be even more sceptical of American riders even if the situation around Villopoto was a little unique (stop-gap for one of the most decorated athletes of the modern era). RV scrapped

suggestions that his MXGP tilt was prompted by money, stating that a rider could earn far more in the United States.

You have to wonder who or what might be considered more of a risk – a top American looking at MXGP or a team courting a leading AMA racer. Overall the investment and oh-so protracted contract negotiations to get Villopoto to Grand Prix were far greater than the athlete's return for those involved. Americans will have to deal with the realisation that 'going global' would mean a totally immersive ask and not simply turning up at Qatar with testing hours under their belts. Who will be next?

THE GOOD

SILLY SEASON

It felt like the rumour mongering and gossip went on for the better part of two months and produced some interesting developments for 2016. Desalle's departure, Suzuki's transition, Yamaha's reorganisation and renewal of Valentin Guillod's services, Monster's re-evaluation of their support after the failure of the Villopoto experiment, Herlings' MX2/MXGP debate eventually fading away and the strange system of how people have to wait on the details of their livelihood until certain athletes make a decision and budgets start to be allocated and confirmed.

In the paddock there were endless chats and meetings and it seemed to be a busier period than usual as well as a goldmine for news that couldn't always be published (see Max Anstie and Shaun Simpson). Desalle was the top of the bunch and a very high profile move to Kawasaki and under the Monster Energy umbrella brought a six-year association with Suzuki to an end.

The same team are still 'under construction' with Stefan Everts lightening his shade from orange to yellow with former owner Sylvain Geboers staying in place for an advisory role on the handover. Desalle will link up with



Julien Lieber is yet to show just what he's capable of

Shaun Simpson's win at Lommel proves he's a real sand master!

former mechanic-now Team Manager Francois Lemarier at KRT and it could be the move that finally ends his title misfortune.

In one way it could be seen as a risk because '25' was consistently an excellent starter on the RM-Z450 and apart from Cairoli is the only other rider to have won Grands Prix every year since 2009. I think many were surprised by his decision to leave the Lommel set-up in light of his continued competitiveness but the forthcoming change of scene with Everts might have played on his mind and I'm sure the contract is suitably rewarding if he finds similar form on the KX450F.

In MX2 Tim Gajser was tied to a unique five year arrangement with HRC, Herlings' decision was made for him by his presence in several hospital rooms and athletes like Tixier, Anstie, Ferrandis and Jonass were sorted fairly early on. Still, there was enough of a change around to make the Grand Prix landscape a curious prospect for 2016.

enduring injury frustration; it is a situation that has touched every factory team in the last half a decade and even reached KTM in 2015 with Tony Cairoli's superlative record now blemished by an arm fracture.

There is credence in the theory because the 450s are harder to manoeuvre than any other motorcycle at full race speed – despite the burgeoning role of electronics. The will to find a fix or remedy to the predicament of seeing the gate attendance smashed through attrition is also a proactive step.

However the 'dump the 450s' case is not so clear cut. A popular opinion is that the physical abilities and technical skills of the riders now are pushing the boundaries of physics when it comes to the bikes – scrubs, whips and manipulation of the 450s are just as much to blame.

We are also firmly in the grips of the 'Carmichael Generation' where young riders now pin-the-grip and go wide-open from the moment the gate drops and perhaps not as respectful to track conditions as they should be – it only takes one or two superior athletes to raise the bar in terms of speed and risk and everybody has to follow. This seems to be the case particularly in MX2...and as GP tracks have presented fewer options it has had heavy consequences. Riders are finding boundaries through their pain thresholds.

As one Team Manager pointed out in a chat on the record - whatever the bike, riders will find a way to push the limits of what they have. Ask the riders themselves and they claim faster tracks and unsatisfactory levels of preparation are the root cause of the injury plague. Taking a hardline and uncompromising approach to this aspect would be far easier and a lot less political 'tonic' than trying to persuade the might of the Japanese to change their production and development stance.

When it comes to the 450s there is also a discrepancy in the speed charts with certain MX2 athletes setting lap-times that would put them in podium contention for MXGP with their 250Fs. The crash rate must be similar if not more than MXGP.

When pushed for how they could see the

evolution of the premier class the powers-that-be have publicly talked about 250cc factory bikes and importantly keeping their prototype status for the future. The majority of MXGP riders do not have an issue with the 450s. Some, like Max Nagl, simply want more power while virtually all of them tweak the engine character through mapping to have the power fed-in exactly how they wish – there are very few untapped and unleashed 450cc motors in the gate.

Allegedly KTM's biggest selling off-roader is the 350SX-F and its combination with Tony Cairoli (and notably with Kevin Strijbos in 2012 as well as Dean Ferris on occasions this year) is proven. It is not a dominant choice for all though and Tommy Searle could not show the potential of the bike this year.

It is debateable how high the 'The 450 Question' will be on the agenda at the next FIM/MSMA meeting after the Motocross of Nations in September but Youthstream President Giuseppe Luongo has already commented that he wants a workable solution in place to start the 2018 season so the brands have almost three years to adjust to perhaps a major shape-shift in the sport.

THE BAD

INJURIES, CRASHES, 450S

2015 marks the first term for FIM CMS President Tony Skillington and the Irishman has been widely credited with taking a strong approach to safety in MXGP resulting in details like mandatory chest and back protection from 2016 onwards. The spate of injuries to Villopoto, Cairoli, Nagl, Van Horebeek, Desalle led to the renewal of the theory that 450s were too fast, heavy and unmanageable for the premier class. It is a train of thought that stretches back almost 10 years but – understandably – manufacturers threw the notion out of the window upon initial discussions having just developed their 450 powerplants, which were also used for other vehicles and products.

Now the FIM and Youthstream are pushing the agenda again and the concern over speed is sitting easier with the brands that are investing and spending on athletes and

THE UGLY

(JUST KIDDING – THERE'S MORE GOOD)!

BRITISH WINNERS

For the first time since 2007 (MacKenzie and Searle) Britain could celebrate Grand Prix winners in both principal classes in the same season. The Grand Prix of Lommel actually brought Shaun Simpson and Max Anstie together for a double airing of the national anthem. UK success hasn't stopped there with Steven Clarke and Adam Sterry running the flag high in EMX250 and Brad Anderson popping up with some two-stroke form in EMX300. Then there is Jack Bintlcliffe in the Honda EMX150s. Long may it continue...

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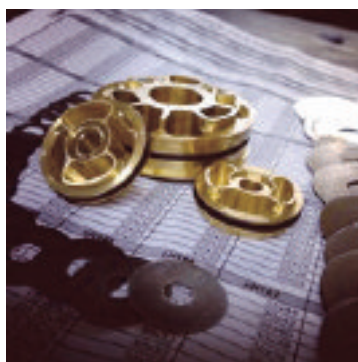
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SPOTLIGHT ON...

CHARLIE HEYMAN #22

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We featured him on the Rage cover last month and now, with both the BYN and Route 77 GT Cup Junior titles under his belt, Charlie Heyman is surely on track for greater things.

This year's success follows on from his amazing performance in the 2013 50cc Auto class and next season could be even better. The 10-year-old is still a tiny pocket rocket and he's planning to stay one more year on the 65.

Starting this year as one of the clear favourites, Charlie took the overall win at the championship openers for both BYN and Route 77 series. And, even though the two series had mainly the same top flight players, Heyman was never under any serious threat in the Route 77 championship. With some dropping out in later rounds he claimed that title with one round to spare.

The story of the BYN was a totally different affair however. Things started to go wrong for Heyman at round two at Cusses Gorse with

injury and dropped points. He had lost his series lead and then at Pontrilas for round three even worse was to come with another two heats messed up.

At this point Vinnie Guthrie had championship control after winning rounds two and three, Alfie Jones was his nearest challenger and third-placed Charlie thought his chance had gone. As events panned out though Guthrie picked up a one-round penalty so missed out on the penultimate event and the new points leader Jones injured himself while training for the season's finale.

You have to feel really sorry for Jones and Guthrie but it's strange the way things work out sometimes. Over the closing two rounds Heyman was back to his brilliant best – 11 wins from 12 races and that was the title done and dusted.

Following his sidelining for the penultimate round Guthrie decided to move up to the 85s but next year it could well be a Heyman versus

Jones re-run in the 65s. Looking back at the two series it's also worth recalling Charlie Palmer was a major force in the early rounds of both series but he was unluckily out of contention with injury by mid-season.

With Charlie off celebrating Rage had a word with his dad Marc.

Rage: Massive congratulations to Charlie for this season's achievements. Can you confirm it's 65s again next year and, if so, what does the plan look like?

MH: "Yep, 65s again next year with eyes on a full European campaign. I've spoken to the ACU and the information to plan next year around should be published in November. We will also do a home national series.

"We didn't do the worlds this year as Charlie was only just 10 and would have been competing against guys older with much more experience. The world finals in Russia next year is a hell of a trip but we will attend. I can't see many people self-funding this – the ACU needs to step up and help like most of the other federations do!"

Rage: With this current season just about wrapped do you have any immediate plans?

MH: "We are having a little break to re-charge the batteries. Charlie's trainer Pat Major [MX74 training] is working out a full- on programme in preparation for next year and we will start on that after we have had a rest. With that said, Charlie already goes circuit training two to three times a week and he's on his BMX with his mates most days."





MASTERS BLASTERS!

PIRELLI SERIES SET FOR GRAND FINALE...

Action packed with last-gasp, tension-filled drama – that was the Thor British Youth Nationals closer at FatCat.

With so many national series on the calendar, sometimes it's a bit of a head-scratcher knowing exactly where to focus next. One thing's for sure though, the return of the British Masters has been a ripping success.

Running under ORMS rules with Pirelli as the title sponsor, the 2015 series kicked off at a very wet Hawkstone Park. Despite some awful early season weather conditions rave reviews followed – that surely says a lot about the skill of the Ken Winstanley-led crew running the show.

Following visits to Dean Moor, Pontrilas, Preston Docks and Foxhill there's one round to go at Whitby on September 12/13 so just who's in line for some silverware?

In the SW85s Team Green buddies Joel Rizzi and Lewis Hall sit second and third respectively in the standings but it's Eddie Jay Wade who has all but sealed the deal with a 159-point series lead. That said, it would have been a whole lot closer all if both Hall and Rizzi hadn't each missed a round.

Nailing the overall win at both Hawkstone and Dean Moor, Hall initially took the championship by the scruff of the neck. Since then though with EJW in prime form since mid-season, winning the next three rounds, he's almost over the line.

Over in the BW85s it's a similar tale of domination as with a 128-point cushion at the top Howard Wainwright just needs to keep it all on-track to claim the trophy at Whitby. Jack Bintliffe was the winning star at the opening round – and he made the podium again at round two – but with clashing Euro commitments he's a few rounds down.

Calum Mitchell is another with an overall win to his name – Preston Docks was his finest moment – and he made third overall at Dean Moor but Calum's another with missing rounds. Take nothing away from Wainwright's superb efforts though – he's been on the podium at

every round and winning shows at Dean Moor and Pontrilas see him on the verge of a major championship as he exits the 85cc class.

At the Foxhill round Sam Price stole the show with a superb overall win and he's in series fourth as Declan Hunter eyes up the runner-up berth held by Dylan Spencer.

Apart from a single heat win for Ethan Gatenby and two for George Fountain it's been a bar-to-bar bust-up in Youth MX2 between Jamie Carpenter and Oli Benton.

Carpenter on the Phoenix Tools iFly Husqvarna has seven moto wins against the six for Hitachi Revo KTM UK runner Benton. That translates into three round wins for Carpenter and two for Benton with Carpenter holding a 61-point lead.

A consistently good show through all rounds has seen Fountain on the podium twice and he looks a pretty solid bet for nothing worse than series third.

In the 125s leader Callum Green squares up for one more joust with second-placed Dee Jay Walker with Green having had the best of it so far but with just 40 points between them it's the closest of the title scraps.

SERIES STANDINGS

SW85cc

1 Eddie Jay Wade 829, 2 Joel Rizzi 670,
3 Lewis Hall 649, 4 Brogan Johnson 628,
5 Reece Martin 623, 6 Tom Murphy 611

BW85cc

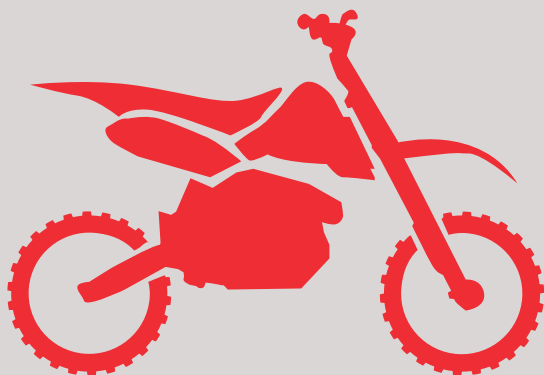
1 Howard Wainwright 815, 2 Dylan Spencer 687,
3 Declan Hunter 665, 4 Sam Price 606,
5 Ben Burridge 535, 6 Ryan Allison 512

Youth MX2

1 Jamie Carpenter 807, 2 Oliver Benton 746,
3 George Fountain 669, 4 Mitchell Warhurst 628,
5 Jake Edey 614, 6 Matt Lomas 531



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FINAL FLING!

BYN'S WRAPPED UP AT FATCAT...

Action packed with last-gasp, tension-filled drama – that was the Thor British Youth Nationals closer at FatCat.

The drama in the 65s actually began four days before the big event when series leader Alfie Jones hit the ground hard. He bashed up a shoulder while practising for what should have been a season's crowning glory and that was a cruel way to lose out.

What it meant was the series top spot Jones inherited from Vinnie Guthrie who was made to sit out the penultimate round at Desertmartin was now back up for grabs.

Charlie Heyman was the conclusive overall victor in Ireland and by following up with all six wins at FatCat he stormed off with the title in champion's style. With both Guthrie and Jones out of the picture all the second place returns at FatCat ended up with Raife Broadley, as did the championship silver medal.

In the battle for a bronze prize Ollie Colmer put his MBO Power machine on podium third in Yorkshire. On the weekend Colmer narrowly beat Ben Pratt but it was Pratt who moved up to grab a series bronze.

Kicking off with a seven-point advantage as series leader, MJW Husqvarna flier Eddie Jay Wade was right in the groove and absolute favourite to lift the SW85cc crown. Team Green recruit and second placed Kacey Hird was the main threat but with EJW going 1-1-3 on Saturday his overnight lead was increased to 21.

Come Sunday though it was all change in heat four when a melted spark plug seized the powerplant on the Husky. Wade was out front initially in that one too but the 25 points collected as he pushed over the line handed the championship baton straight over to Hird.

In heats five and six EJW fired back with in a win and a second but Hird had the title in his sights and ran 5-3 to take the crown.

"I can't really get my head round it but what a season," said Hird. "From breaking my foot, to my bike getting stolen and then having to ride a borrowed bike off Dylan Woodcock. Maybe not the race results this weekend but consistency wins championships."

In the battle for weekend bragging rights

Lewis Hall excelled and with two wins and four runner-up finishes he claimed that for Team Green. One heat win and second overall was like Carter's (MBO Power) reward for his best series show as champion Hird took podium third.

In the BW85 class Hardcore Racing team buddies Harry Kimber and Tom Grimshaw went into FatCat 29 points apart and had it pretty much to themselves at the top. Tom had unluckily lost valuable points at the previous round with a mechanical failure and at FatCat his challenge ended even more abruptly when he suffered a leg injury in heat one.

That was game over for Tom as Hardcore Harry picked up the title, running a solid two-day card. A single runner-up return was his best result and eighth his worst and Kimber ended up in weekend fourth overall.

There was absolutely no doubt about the FatCat sand master though – that was Monster Energy Kawasaki star Jed Etchells. He romped home with five wins but in the weekend skirmish for box positions a massive heat one tumble cost him as he settled on third.

Taking one heat win and second overall, Rossi Beard served full notice he will be one of next season's stars.

On the top step it was Callum Gasson. This was his first-ever BYN overall win and it was a gritty show from the TM rider who moved up to second in the championship with Etchells elevated to series third.

Alexander Brown mixing it in tough, sandy conditions is always a good combo and he took all six wins to wrap-up the 125cc smoker class crown.

Taking a look at the series statistics that's 21 wins from 30 races for Brown as Oli Benton secured series second. Another great show from OB made it four overall runner-up finishes for him with one stand-out overall win in Ireland. Callum Green made podium third for the fourth time for championship third.

By far the most gripping contest, going right down to the wire, was for the wonderfully well set-up Youth Open title. Jordan Eccles (DRF) had topped the points standings since round one but things didn't go to plan in Ireland and it

was season-long chaser Luke Smith who took over the top.

At FatCat and with Eccles now in his favourite sand pit it was a case of role reversal but he had 15 points to claw back.

Eccles was on top form over the two days and, with the RMJ crew in his corner, he carded three wins and three seconds. Smith went 3-2-3 on day one, then took the win in heat four. A second behind Eccles in race five cut his lead to just five points and with Eccles leading the final moto Smith needed to finish second for the title.

"I made an okay start to race six," said Smith, "moved up into third place and was closing in on second when I hit a kicker on the tabletop which sent me straight over the bars. I was doing my best but that mistake cost me it all."

Gutted didn't anywhere near cover it for Smith as Eccles went on to scoop the overall together with his second BYN title on the bounce. Impressive Robbie Dowson won heats three and six and he finished second overall as Jay Hague took weekend third.

FINAL SERIES STANDINGS

Youth Open

1 Jordan Eccles 1275, 2 Luke Smith 1214, 3 Robbie Dowson 1155, 4 George Grigg Pettitt 1138, 5 Joe Hodgson 1013, 6 Jake Edey 988

Youth 125

1 Alexander Brown 1312, 2 Oliver Benton 1256, 3 Callum Green 1182, 4 Dee Jay Walker 1129, 5 Joe Cadwallader 1048, 6 Kathryn Booth 918

BW85cc

1 Harry Kimber 1684, 2 Callum Gasson 1623, 3 Jed Etchells 1610, 4 Ben Clark 1545, 5 Dan Bewley 1541, 6 Cameron Turley 1386

SW85cc

1 Kacey Hird 1719, 2 Eddie Jay Wade 1715, 3 Lewis Hall 1671, 4 Louie Kessel 1578, 5 Sam Nunn 1553, 6 Lewis Wood 1544

Junior 65cc

1 Charlie Heyman 1174, 2 Raife Broadley 1119, 3 Ben Pratt 1007, 4 Ollie Colmer 948, 5 Alfie Jones 944, 6 Bradd Lee Timmis 944

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OVER AND OUT!

Tyla Rattray talks us through an outstanding career that saw him lift an MX2 world title and challenge for championships in America. We'll also have all the action from the Vets MXdN at Farleigh Castle and crown world champions as the MXGP and MX2 title chases reach a climax in Glen Helen. Ryan Houghton checks out the 2016 Honda CRFs in Italy and we'll also take a look at the weekend warriors who battle it out for titles in the Scott Amateur Nationals. All in all it's gonna be an action packed issue so check it out on October 2...

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